BEHIND THE CURTAIN

A Novel

BY

HENRY ROBERT ADDISON

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III

LONDON
JOHN MAXWELL AND COMPANY
122, FLEET STREET
MDCCCLXV

LONDON:
SAVILL AND EDWARDS, PRINTERS, CHANDOS STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.

CONTENTS

OF

THE THIRD VOLUME.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

CHAPTER I.

A TÊTE-À-TÊTE.

LITTLE was said by Leslie as they drove along. The peer, however, described again and again the manner in which our hero had saved his life, accompanying his narration with the warmest acknowledgments to his preserver. Lady Emily kept her handkerchief to her eyes, evidently for the purpose of concealing her tears. This might have been unsatisfactory to her lover, but it was more than compensated by the warm squeeze she gave his hand as her father showered

down blessings on his head, and plainly told the depth of that attachment, which on receipt of her letter Leslie had almost doubted. To assert that a more happy trio returned from the Crystal Palace on the day to which we allude, would be to risk a falsehood. True, their joy was not vociferous, but it was profound. The loud babble of ordinary happiness may be deemed by the light thinker the supreme expression of contentment, but there is a luxury in silent enjoyment far beyond the luxury of mere expression, and this our party felt.

Arrived at length in Berkeley-square, the carriage drove up to Thomas's Hotel. Here the party alighted, and after a full half hour spent in getting rid of their dusty habiliments and in making the necessary change of dress, they sat down to one of those luxurious meals for which this hotel is so justly celebrated.

The presence of the waiters during dinner was naturally a restraint on conversation, and it was not until dessert had been placed on table and the servants had left the room, that confidential intercourse could take place between them; nor even then did the words of the peer and his lovely daughter flow in that easy and unrestrained manner that Leslie had been accustomed to. An evident reserve, not arising from any want of affection, but rather from some untold circumstance, checked their words, and our hero felt almost afraid of awakening some unpleasant memory if he asked what had passed since he last saw them.

After a short time thus spent, Lady Emily rose and left the room, but not before her father had made her promise to return very soon.

The door closed on the fair girl. The peer took a bumper of sherry, and after

sundry hums and haws addressed Leslie, who sat dreading the coming disclosure of circumstances with which he was already thoroughly acquainted.

"John, you have heard of the painful occurrence which has taken place since you left Dublin?"

"I have, indeed, my lord."

"Drop that formal mode of address, and speak to me as I wish you to do—speak to me as a father."

"I wish that there were a term stronger—a thousand times stronger—that I might address you in it."

"Never mind—never mind, John; but listen, for I have but a short time to tell you a long tale."

"I am all attention."

"I was long past my fortieth year when I married a lovely young girl with a large fortune. The world blamed me, and made unpleasant remarks on the dis-

parity of our ages. I was, however, infatuated with the girl's beauty, and thought myself the happiest of men when I led her to the altar. Had I been wise I should have paused, for in wedding me I have every reason to believe she jilted Mr. Sydney, a brother of Lord Grantchester, a model of piety and talent. I should have remembered that the woman who can heartlessly throw off a sincere and warm admirer is capable of doing the same thing a second time; but I was blinded by passion, and married her.

"For twelve months after our nuptials we travelled in Italy, and, to my great joy, she gave birth to a daughter in Florence. Yes, my beloved Emily was born on the very banks of the Arno.

"My happiness thus crowned I hastened back to England, where I had been

offered a post in the Ministry. Fond of politics, I at once accepted it; and, as I said before, quickly returned to fulfil my now arduous duties. These occupied much of my time, but my wife never reproached me with the consequent neglect; indeed, there had never been what may be styled 'an obtruding love,' it was rather a calm and silent affection—some might have ranked it as esteem, but as I was at least twenty years her senior I was content to feel grateful for it.

"One night I had been detained later than usual by my legislative duties, and at once proceeded to my room. Here I met my valet, who asked me whether I had seen her ladyship.

"'Seen her!' replied I. 'How could that be? I have only just quitted the House of Lords.'

"'My lady went out upwards of an hour ago. She left the house on foot, so

probably your lordship knows where she is gone.'

"'This is strange—most strange! Did she take Lady Emily and her nurse with her?'

"'Oh no, my lord; they are, I believe, both fast asleep in the nursery.'

"At this moment I saw a small note lying on my dressing-table. It was addressed to me in Lady Urmstone's handwriting. It ran, as well as I can recollect, thus:—

"'Seek not to discover my abode—I leave you for ever. Any attempt to follow me will only cause exposure and disappointment. Think on me as one who is dead. God bless you for all your kindness! May the child I leave you more than replace

"'Your infatuated

"'EMILY.'

"Years rolled on, and I strictly fulfilled the last wish of her who was now dead to me for ever. I refrained from making any inquiries whether she who was once so dear to me still lived or not; I never sought to know. I resigned my official position and retired to my country seat, where I brought up my darling Emily, wholly unconscious of her mother's fate. She believed herself an orphan, and I encouraged her in that belief; but oh! my dear boy, she is, alas! no longer ignorant of her parentage; a dreadful — a fearful revelation has shattered her young nerves, and it is therefore with double joy that I meet you again, since I am convinced you alone can overcome her sorrow — her deep and poignant affliction. But ere I ask you to undertake this painful task, I will relate to you all that has occurred."

He then, after a few moments' pause,

related to Leslie all that had taken place at Kingstown.

"I have heard of this, and I grieve from my heart to say, that Lady Emily feels so deeply the wound inflicted, that she has determined never to marry," observed Leslie.

"What—what? Surely this is some foolish lover's quarrel?"

"Not so; she has expressed her unalterable determination, and I am a miserable man for life."

"John! John! this must not be. Although I thought her full young to marry, and I had hoped that, with my help, you might have acquired a higher rank and station, yet never for a moment did I waver in my desire to see you wedded to my darling child, and this before I died."

"May Heaven bless you for your kindness!" cried Leslie, seizing the peer's hand, and kissing it.

At this moment Emily entered, and tea was ordered to be brought in. A sign from the peer made his adopted son aware of his desire that the present theme might not be continued. The conversation then turned on the ordinary topics of the day.

Lady Emily carefully avoided addressing Leslie; she never allowed her eyes to rest upon him, she seemed wholly engaged with her father. This was so palpable that our hero could not help observing it; he sighed as he saw her estrangement, and wept within his innermost soul. Had he been a man of the world, had he successfully read the human heart, he would have exulted and triumphed in the seeming coldness of her he loved. He would then have known that her conduct arose from a passion she feared might be too plainly shown, if she addressed him. She equally dreaded that her eyes might betray her secret; it was for

this reason that she did not *dare* to look upon him.

Suddenly the peer arose, and pleading as an excuse that he had some letters of importance to write, he left the room, insisting, however, as he did so, that his adopted son and his dear child should remain together till his return. This proceeding seemed most strange to the young couple; to the reader it will scarcely require explanation.

For a few moments they remained perfectly silent — each seemed buried in a profound reverie; at last Leslie could contain himself no longer, but jumping up, he fell on one knee before Emily, and seizing her hand, imprinted a thousand kisses on it.

"Emily! dearest Emily! how have I offended you?"

"You have not offended me, but do go back to your seat."

Still she did not withdraw her hand.

"No! I will not rise until you have forgiven me;" and he still persisted in kissing her passive hand.

"Do, do believe me, dear John; I have nothing to forgive."

"Dear John! then I am indeed blest. Oh! repeat those words again!" and suddenly arising, he imprinted a kiss upon a pair of coral lips that did not shrink from the embrace. "Thank Heaven!" cried he, as he resumed his seat.

Emily now assumed a graver tone—"John, this is very wrong; I had determined to receive you with coldness and indifference, but alas! I cannot;" and the lovely girl burst into a flood of tears, which gave our hero a delicious opportunity of drying them.

"But why? tell me, sweet girl—why receive me with coldness? Have I done anything——"

"Again I repeat no! You have never acted otherwise than I could wish you."

"You speak in enigmas."

"Not so; I had hoped you would not have compelled me again to allude to the painful subject."

"Oh! if it be only that, Lord Urmstone has explained to me everything, and the only disclosure which wounded me in the narrative, was to find that a fresh obstacle has arisen in the fact of your being now a wealthy and independent heiress, and consequently farther than ever removed from the low-born creature of your father's bounty."

"Oh! John, speak not thus; you are a thousand times worthy of me, the daughter of——"

"Stay! not another word; am I not——"

"I will not hear another word; you are my preserver—my brother—a model for all

your sex. What would the world say, to see a being, the very soul of honour, link himself with one who dare not name her mother? No! no! I will never thus degrade you, although I love you—yes! I proudly admit that I love you more than life itself, yet——"

"Blessed confession! 'tis all I ask. I will re-enter the army—I will carve my way to honours and distinction, and these gained return, and then, possessor of a *real* name, will proudly claim your hand;" and again he folded Emily in his arms.

"I desire no further proofs of your courage or devotion to win my heart; you possess it already; but alas! I cannot give my hand. Do estimate properly the feeling which dictates to me this line of conduct. Silent and grief-stricken, I will retire to the country, and thence watch your brilliant career."

"Would you like to see me marry another?"

Emily started. She had never even thought of this; the question was put lightly, but the fond girl did not like it.

"No! — not exactly — there is no necessity that you should do so; but if you did, I'd still bless you."

"And my wife?" added Leslie, who now began to see he had conquered.

"Oh! don't say that hideous word—I can't bear it—don't, John, it breaks my heart!"

John jumped up and would again have embraced her, but at this moment the waiter entered, and stated that Lord Urmstone felt so fatigued and shaken by his fall, that he would not appear again; he would, however, be glad to see her ladyship before she retired to sleep. The man then left the room.

"Go, dearest Emily," said Leslie, as

he grasped her hand, having risen to bid her adieu; "go, my loved girl, and see your father, who, thank Heaven, approves of our union."

"Are you sure?"

"He told me so himself."

"Indeed!"

"And you? will you not forego those cruel scruples?"

"I am no heartless coquette. I will be candid with you. I will consult my beloved father, and, if he wishes it, then——"

"Oh! speak—speak on!"

"Why, then, perhaps—perhaps I may say yes!" and, before her lover could snatch even a single embrace, the lovely girl had fled from the room.

As Captain Leslie walked home, he appeared to tread an elastic pavement; to him the whole world seemed *couleur de rose.*

CHAPTER II.

WELL-MATCHED.

Mr. Scarsdale sat in his easy-chair enjoying with all the gusto of a high-bred Englishman his half-hour after dinner—that half-hour generally devoted to happy and proud reflection by many successful professional men—when the thread of his mental review was suddenly cut short by the entrance of his usually well-trained butler.

"There is a person anxious to see you, sir, on business."

"What is the meaning of this? Have I not given you the strictest orders never to disturb me after dinner? If the person wishes to see me, as you say, on business,

desire him to call at my office in the morning."

"I told him so, sir, but he said he *must* see you."

"Where is the person?"

"I left him outside; he was so pressing I did not like to let him into the hall, lest he might force his way in."

"Is he any one who visits here?"

"Oh, la! no, sir; he's a sort of shabby-genteel man, who may be coming —in my mind, leastways—to ask for charity."

"Tell the man to go away, and if he refuses, send for a policeman to remove him; I'll not see him. If he has any letter or petition, let him leave it."

"I will, sir; but he says if you knew who he was, and the business he came on, you wouldn't refuse him admission, and he also said——"

"Did he say what that business was?"

"No, he only said I was to say it concerned Lady Grantchester, or some such name."

"Idiot! why did you not say this at first? Show him in instantly."

The servant left the room, and the now roused lawyer threw himself back in his chair; in a few minutes the butler returned, ushering in a man of ordinary stature, closely muffled up. Scarsdale waved the new-comer to a chair, and desired the butler, who officiously kept moving about the sideboard, to quit the room.

The door closed, the lawyer quietly waited to be addressed, but, as his visitor seemed disinclined to begin, he at once addressed him—

"May I ask to whom I am indebted for this intrusion on my privacy?"

"Certainly you can; but it's not a matter of course that I should reply; we

must come to a fuller understanding before I opens my mind."

"If you are only come in disguise to talk in enigmas, I must at once put an end to this interview; I thought you came to give me some information relative to the late strange abduction of Lady Grantchester."

"And perhaps I do. I don't want no mysteries; but I must first make my terms, afore I opens my mouth."

"Name those terms."

"You must pledge yourself—and I'll take your word for it, as I hear you are a highly honourable chap—that you wont attempt to discover who I am, and if you find I've not always acted on the square, you wont try and punish me."

"Well, and if I decline those terms?"

"Then I don't open my mouth, and a certain lady, about whom I wish to talk with you, is lost for ever. Besides, you

must promise to help me to revenge myself on the man—a high snob, I promise you —who has injured the lady I came about and done all he could to destroy me."

"And what pecuniary reward do you expect?"

"Whatever you think proper; it ain't money I care about."

"Well then, I agree to your terms, and pledge myself as you desire. Now state all you know, freely and without alarm;" and Scarsdale pulled from his pocket a small memorandum-book and prepared to take notes.

"Not so, I'll have nothing written down; if you want me to be candid, listen, and I'll tell you all, but no writing."

"Well, as you like—go on."

"I took my lady abroad," muttered the stranger, as he began to undo the woollen wrapper that hid his features, and divested himself of his great coat. "Ah, you

seem surprised—but it's gospel truth; I took her abroad."

Mr. Scarsdale saw that he must act gently in this affair, or he would frighten and probably spoil the evidence, so, in a careless voice, he asked—"And why?"

"To please a bigger villain than myself; he doubtlessly meant to destroy her, as he afterwards tried to destroy me; but I'll be quits!"

"Was it the doctor who tried to poison Captain Leslie?"

"No—no, it was a far greater man than that common ruffian, but I shan't tell you his name just now, so it's no use asking; I tell you I took my lady to Brussels."

"And is she there now?"

"Gently, gently; it ain't no use cross-examining me. I'll tell my story my own way, and no other. May I take a

glass of wine? you've forgotten to offer me one."

"Oh, by all means," cried the now interested lawyer, affecting the utmost calmness; then pouring out a bumper, he handed it to his visitor, who sipped it slowly down, occasionally holding it up to the light and examining its colour, thereby showing that he had been accustomed to similar libations.

At length Mr. Scarsdale addressed him.

"Lady Grantchester is then at Brussels?"

"I don't say she is not; but I'll tell you a fact, no one in the world could find her there. Besides, if I thought any one was going to disturb her, I'm blest if ever she'd be found again; so it's no use pumping."

"Candidly tell me then, what do you propose?"

"I proposes to go over and fetch her,

and I expects a handsome reward on delivering her up to my lord. No questions asked; and all your efforts to prosecute the rascal that robbed my lord of a wife and tried to rob me of my life."

"I don't exactly see my way."

"Oh! I understand—I twigs! you don't like to trust me. Well, it's very natural, and I don't blame you; it's quite *commey fo*, as the French say. I admits to you I've not always done the high moral, so you've a right to doubt me; but I'll square it in a minute. Let one of your clerks go over with me; mind, he's to bring plenty of rowdy for our expenses, and to bring back the poor lady. I wont ask a single cooter for myself till I've lodged my lady in Grantchester House."

"Well, that seems fair enough. But how am I to be sure you are not misleading me—what proofs can you give me?"

"Why, now, you didn't think I was

such a fool as to come here on this matter without proper vouchers. No; *je conny mew que sa.* Here—will these satisfy you?" and he pulled out and handed to the astonished solicitor several letters addressed by Lady Grantchester to her lord. A mere glance at these convinced the lawyer of their authenticity.

"And how came you possessed of these?"

"They were given to me by the writer."

"For what purpose?"

"To forward to their destination."

"And you——"

"*Oui;* I intercepted them—that's all. Nay, don't stare; I've done worse than that in my day."

"But such an act was——"

"Criminal, very likely. But you promised not to take notice of such matters;

so don't let us talk about them, they may irritate us."

"Well then, to come back. When will you start, and what additional information are you likely to give me?"

"Well, I haven't much more to say; but I feel uncommon dry, I suppose it's the effect of your fire. Tell me, have you a drop of brandy you could let me have before I venture out in the cold—I've a long way to go?"

"How far?" eagerly asked the other.

"It wont do!" replied the stranger, playing off a knowing gesture; "old birds are not to be caught by chaff! Will you let me have the brandy or no?"

"Of course I will. Ring the bell, and your wishes shall be gratified." The man did so, and the butler entered.

"Give me some brandy!"

The servant approached the sideboard and took out from the cellaret a green

bottle, from which he endeavoured to draw the cork. After one or two ineffectual efforts, the visitor suddenly started up, and, seizing the bottle, at once drew forth the cork.

"There, you Johnny, that's the way. Why, I'm blowed if I thinks you ever drawed a cork before."

Before the butler could utter a rejoinder his master had ordered him to quit the room, and the stranger returning to the table poured out nearly a tumblerful of brandy, and drank it off.

"Mr. Scarsdale, I congratulate you on your liquor—it is real cognac; none of Brett's cheap and nasty."

"And now, my friend, having slaked your thirst——"

"I understand; I may as well be off. Yes, I don't think I've any more to say," and the man began muffling himself up again.

"You will then call at my office to-morrow?"

"Not if I knows it. No, no, that would never do. I'm not going to draw back; no, far from it. Let your clerk be on the platform at the Croydon Station to-morrow evening at seven o'clock, and I'll join him, and go with him to Brussels."

"But how is he to know you?"

"I'll wear a red comforter round my neck, and if he sees this, let him come up to me and ask me 'how far it is to Grantchester,' and I'll reply, 'not so far as Brussels,' and then he'll know me. And mind he's got plenty of cash, for her ladyship's return depends upon it."

"All this shall be done. Now, before you go, will you not give me your name? It cannot injure you."

"That's true. Well, on two conditions you shall have it. Promise me that no

one shall dog my footsteps, and give me a sov. to take me to Croydon."

"I pledge you my word you shall not be followed. Here is a sovereign."

"All right; and now let me out. I don't want to be seen again by your flunkey."

The shrewd lawyer rose, and, opening the hall door himself, let the intruder out, who, as he passed through, uttered in a hoarse whisper—

"My name is Coleman."

Mr. Scarsdale, highly pleased at the important information he had received, closed the door, and, with a smile of triumph, entered the room where tea was prepared, and joined the ladies of his family in unwonted good humour.

CHAPTER III.

THE PEER AND HIS PROTÉGÉ.

THE train which should have brought Lord Grantchester to London was late in its arrival—a circumstance not altogether without parallel on the Great Eastern line, and when it arrived it did not bring the long looked-for nobleman. Leslie, who had been on the platform for at least an hour, felt somewhat chagrined at the occurrence, as he knew how invariably punctual the Earl was in all his appointments, and began to fear some sudden illness or accident might be the cause of his lordship's non-appearance. Had business or pleasure detained him, he would doubtlessly have telegraphed to

say so. Nor was it likely that this should be the case, as, in a note addressed to our hero the evening before, he stated that he had arranged all his affairs, and should be glad to start early on the following morning; to this he added a request that his valued secretary would meet him, with his lordship's carriage, at the station. Whether it would be better to remain and await another train or no, Leslie felt uncertain; but at length recollecting that a telegram might await him at home, he jumped into the carriage, and drove off direct to Grantchester House.

Anxious as our Victoria Cross was again to see his noble patron, yet, truth to tell, his thoughts did not continually dwell on him. As he threw himself back in the corner of the well-stuffed chariot (for Lord Grantchester had the good taste still to cling to these superior equipages), his thoughts reverted

to the fortunate rencontre at the Crystal Palace, and the subsequent evening of delight he had passed with Lady Emily. Each fond word she had uttered, each kind glance she had cast upon him, were reviewed with ecstasy, and none of these were omitted. The memory of true love is tenacious; it treasures up every trifle that may serve to feed a hope, it dwells almost on each breath which comes from the heart it clings to. That Emily's noble resolution to allow pride to dominate over affection, had given way before Leslie's earnest appeals, was evident; and our hero now lolled back, his eyes shut, his hands clasped, dreaming of love, matrimony, and a hearth blessed and cheered by the smile of her he loved.

Indulging in these happy day-dreams, Leslie scarcely noticed the distance he travelled over, and was not a little surprised on the vehicle stopping at the door of

Grantchester House, a distance of some seven or eight miles, which our lover, wrapped in his elysium, seemed to have traversed in a few seconds.

"I am sorry to say his lordship has not arrived," said Leslie, as he alighted.

"Pardon me, sir," replied the servitor, "he has been here nearly two hours. His lordship is now in his study, and expressed a hope that you would join him on your return."

The surprised secretary hastened to the chamber designated.

As he threw open the door he perceived the Earl busily engaged in reading. His attention was so engrossed by the book before him, that he did not look up till the noise of the closing door aroused him from his studies; then, perceiving Leslie, he threw aside the volume he had been reading, and advanced and warmly wel-

comed the young protégé. Heartily he shook Leslie by the hand; then, holding him at arm's length, scanned him from head to foot. A strange reminiscence seemed to strike him, and, bursting into a flood of tears, the peer abruptly left the room.

Captain Leslie would have felt more surprise had he not been aware of the delicate state of his lordship's health. He ascribed his present agitation to illness, and quietly sat down to await his return. Having nothing else to do, he picked up and examined the work on which his patron had been engaged. It bore the beautiful and, to Lord Grantchester, the apposite title of *Wait and Hope.* No wonder, then, that this charming tome —written by that highly-gifted poet, Edmund Reade—had absorbed all the peer's attention. It was in prose, and professed to be a novel; but it

breathed all the warm fervour of the poet's mind.

In a few minutes Lord Grantchester returned.

"Excuse me, my dear friend, but I was suddenly overcome by the strong likeness you bear to my adored wife. An old soldier, it is true, should not shed a tear; but alas! I cannot help it. Mine, though apparently a happy lot, has indeed been a life of care."

Leslie, anxious to turn the subject, now asked his patron how he came to miss him at the station?

"I missed the direct train, and consequently came round by Hitchin. Indeed, were it not for the number of tunnels I had to pass through, I think I should have preferred that line. Arrived at the terminus at King's Cross, I called a hackney-carriage and hastened hither. I sent a groom to Shoreditch to tell you

this, but he has evidently made some mistake. I really felt considerable alarm at your non-arrival. And now, my dear boy, tell me all about yourself and your friends. When did you hear from Lord Urmstone?"

"I am happy to say that he is in town, and proposes, with his daughter, to call on your lordship the day after to-morrow."

"I shall be delighted to see them. And tell me, have you seen anything of my brother George? I must write off to him at once, and let him know that I am here."

"I believe he is already aware of it. I met him at Mr. Scarsdale's two days ago, when your expected arrival was announced to him."

"Dear—dear George, how rejoiced he will be to see me; nor am I less anxious to behold him; for from his lips I shall

hear news of her I love dearer than life itself."

At this moment a note was brought in and presented to Lord Grantchester. It came from George, and ran thus:—

"My dearest Brother,

"Circumstances over which I have no control compel me to go down to Yorkshire. In three days, however, I shall be back, and will then hasten to see you, and assure you how sincerely I am

"Your affectionate Brother,

"George Sydney."

Leslie at once saw the motive which thus urged Sydney to absent himself; nor could he wonder at it. The Earl would be sure to inquire after his wife, and George would as surely have to break the afflicting news of her abduction, as he (George) believed, her suicide. That an

attached brother should avoid such a task was scarcely a matter of surprise.

"I am disappointed at not seeing George, and feel somewhat fatigued with my journey. I will lie down for an hour before dinner; in the meantime, you will doubtlessly be glad to take a stroll through the grounds; but first I must know that you are located in your future home."

The Earl rang the bell and desired that the housekeeper should attend. In a few minutes Mrs. Rearden (now transformed into Mrs. Thompson) made her appearance.

"Have you caused a proper set of apartments to be prepared for Captain Leslie, my secretary?"

"I have, my lord," replied the amiable lady, dropping a curtsey.

"Show him to them."

"I will, my lord," and she bobbed again.

"And so, good-bye till dinner. Always take care to command as if this house were your own; and adieu for the present. Don't forget, my dear Marks, we dine exactly at six."

"Marks, Marks!" muttered the old woman to herself; "and so like my lady! Drat me if I don't think there's summut in it. I don't like it; but I'll ferret it out. Here's your room, sir. Pull the bell once, sir, if you wants a man-servant; ring twice, and one of the maids will wait on you. This is the sitting-room, this the bed-room, and this the dressing-room. Captain Marks, I think my lord called you?"

"Marks Leslie."

"Oh! well, I once had a relation who was called Marks, and I was a-going to ask——"

"You had better not linger here; his lordship may want you."

"True, sir, true; I go. Might I ask——"

"No, no; another time. I have an important letter to write just now," and he held the door open.

"If I can be of any use, at any time, command me, sir. Good morning!" and quickly passing out, she muttered to herself, "I must watch that young chap; I don't like him."

"There's something about that cringing old woman that makes me shudder. I shall have my eye upon her," and Leslie threw himself into a chair, and began scribbling a long note to Lady Emily.

CHAPTER IV.

AGAIN UNITED.

It was late at night when Lady Grantchester embarked on board the steam-vessel which plies between Ostend and London. Her companion, Mr. Coleman, sent (as he stated) by her noble husband to fetch her, assiduously attended on her, and, with Mr. Scarsdale's clerk, paid her every attention. For reasons best known to himself, the former had begged of her ladyship not to converse more than was absolutely necessary with the latter. He assured her that such was Lord Grantchester's wish, and this was sufficient to secure his fond wife's obedience. The passage was rather a rough one, and, as

she suffered much at sea, Lady Grantchester remained quiet in her cot till nearly noon on the following day, when she was aroused by the stewardess, who informed her that in another hour she would arrive at London Bridge. She then arose and prepared to land.

As soon as the vessed touched the shore Coleman despatched Mr. Scarsdale's clerk to his employer's office to announce their arrival. The young man, unaware that his duty was rather to remain and watch the other's movements, hurried off.

A carriage was called, and Lady Grantchester with Coleman stepped into it. After receiving some directions from the latter, the coachman drove on.

For the first few minutes her ladyship did not look up. Deeply engaged in offering up a prayer of thanksgiving to Providence for thus restoring her once more to her husband, she scarcely noticed

the streets through which she passed, till Coleman, starting up, desired the driver to pull up at the door of a miserable-looking tavern, situated in a lone and gloomy situation.

"Why do you stop?" inquired her ladyship; "oh, do not delay. I am all anxiety to reach home."

"And so you shall, presently; but you must first descend here. I have a few words to say to you ere we proceed farther."

Lady Grantchester felt considerably alarmed; but as she was wholly in her companion's power, and she saw no help at hand, she thought it better to obey without a murmur, and got out of the vehicle as she was desired, and followed her conductor up to a shabby room, bespeaking the utmost poverty. Here Coleman handed her ladyship a seat, and, after locking the door, took a large

book from a drawer and approached her. Lady Grantchester trembled from head to foot.

"This is a Bible," said Coleman, offering the volume to the affrighted lady, who was so agitated she nearly let the sacred record drop from her hands—"this is a Bible; kiss it and swear to tell the truth, or you never leave this room alive," and he took from his pocket a life-preserver, and laid it upon the table.

"Good heavens! what do you mean? I beseech you——"

"It is needless to talk," interrupted the ruffian; "listen, and repeat after me, as you value your life."

He now took out a piece of paper, which he read aloud. He insisted on Lady Grantchester echoing—

"'I hereby swear, by all I hold dear, that I will never, directly or indirectly, make known to any one alive any suspi-

cion I entertain as regards my removal to Lion House, my detention there, or my removal to Brussels; nor will I accuse or implicate any individual alive, or charge any one with being an accomplice in the crime of my removal. And this I solemnly declare and swear.' "

"And now kiss the book," added Coleman.

His victim did so. The man's manner at once altered to familiar joviality; he felt himself to be safe, and he cared for little else.

"And now, my lady, all is square. I am certain you will not break your oath, not that I think you would willingly betray me; and as to the rascally doctor and George Sydney——"

"My brother-in-law?"

"Most true; but of this more another time. Some day or other I'll tell you all about it, and free you from that part of

the oath that relates to Master George, the rascal! But I'll be revenged," muttered the villain.

Lady Grantchester now timidly ventured to ask whether he wished to detain her longer, or whether he would proceed to Grantchester House.

"Oh, by all means; we'll start immediately; the cab is waiting. We now understand one another, so there is nothing to detain us. *Allong, allong,*" and he opened the door and escorted Lady Grantchester to the vehicle.

At length they arrived at the gates of Grantchester House. Here Coleman jumped out, and directed the driver to proceed to the main entrance. At the door Mr. Scarsdale stood ready to receive the injured lady, whom he conducted to a distant saloon, as prearranged. Coleman went away. The Earl had been prepared by Mr. Scarsdale for his wife's arrival,

but the clever lawyer thought it better to give him a second warning, a further preparation, before he brought them together. For this purpose the solicitor, having first seen Lady Grantchester comfortably settled, left the room to seek the expectant nobleman.

To say how the sufferer's heart beat with joy and pleasurable anticipation as she looked around her and recognised many objects she had known in her youth, and above all, as she now knew, that she would within a few minutes be reunited to him in whom her every hope and joy centred—to describe such emotions would be impossible. They were pleasurable beyond portraying; yet, joyous as they were, they were painful to dwell upon.

Presently footsteps were heard, the door opened, and the next moment Lady Grantchester was clasped in the arms of her adoring husband.

The lawyer withdrew. It was not a scene for a third party to witness.

The fond endearments, the vows of long-cherished and long-enduring love, the reader may imagine and sympathize with, but they are too sacred, too holy for the pen of a stranger to reveal.

In a short time Mr. Scarsdale returned, and, after receiving the warm and heart-felt expression of the Earl's gratitude, and having promised to dine and spend the evening with the happy pair, he returned to his office, where a dozen clamorous clients loudly expressed their discontent at his absence.

Lord Grantchester now sent for his secretary, who instantly obeyed the summons. No sooner, however, did her ladyship cast her eyes on him, than she screamed rather than uttered "It is he!" and after a few incoherent expressions, fell fainting into her husband's arms. Leslie

was at a loss to understand the scene; on the other hand, the now distracted Earl naturally believed it was a relapse, and motioning our hero to leave the room, he himself undertook the task of recovering his loved partner.

Presently her senses returned. Her first anxious glance was cast around the room, as if in search of some one; then she uttered in broken sentences, "Where is he?—I never saw such a likeness—tell me who is he?—whence does he come?"

"If you mean my secretary, whom you saw just now, I was fortunate enough to meet with him at Lord Urmstone's."

"Indeed! I'm afraid I'm very silly; long confinement has probably weakened my nerves. It was foolish on my part; but when I saw the youth, I was struck with his extraordinary likeness to you, and I could not help thinking of our dear boy; nay, it almost made me recur to

that belief for which I have been called mad—a belief which, after a long and painful struggle, I have banished from my mind. Come, dear Charles, smile again; it was only a passing cloud, such another shall not occur again;" and she fondly kissed his hand.

The Earl was again reassured; but as he led Lady Grantchester to her apartment, he could not help mentally reverting to his own strange feelings when he himself first saw Leslie.

CHAPTER V.

THE TEA-MEETING.

BEHOLD the usually quiet town of Leeds in a state of feverish excitement. The Bull-ring rings with voices, Boar-lane is bored by crowds of operatives; the passing stranger gathering from the murmur that a distinguished visitor is about to arrive in the old manufacturing town. Many, indeed, supposed that a scion of royalty was about to inspect the Cloth Hall, and pass in review a regiment of local volunteers. How egregiously would the poor stranger be mistaken! Let him read the large poster which graces every vacant wall, and he will perceive that—

"The Honourable George Sydney will in a few hours arrive in Leeds, and proposes (D.V.) to preside at the great meeting on Bramhill-moor, where the errors of Catholicism are to be discussed, and a collection made for the purpose of adding an additional wing to the new Bethesda Chapel."

That an "Honourable" falls far short of a royal Duke it must be confessed, but if a community cannot command the presence of one, why the said community must be content to put up with the other, upon the admitted principle, that when the moon is out of sight, a star in the heavens is most welcome. Manufacturing people, having no titular rank amongst themselves, warmly welcome every visitor of title, and when (as in the present case) the distinction of aristocratic birth is further supported by the

prized stamp of theological distinction and oratorical powers, how doubly precious does it seem in a locality where sectarianism takes the place of politics, and where a theatre is an abomination!

At about three o'clock George Sydney arrived at the White Horse Hotel, where a deputation awaited him, all dressed in suits of black with white neckcloths, to distinguish them from the surrounding crowd, to welcome the pet of Exeter Hall, and to solicit the honour of conducting the great man to the proposed banquet, as soon as might be convenient. Fortunately, our London orator had frequently attended similar feasts, and as he well knew from past experience, that nothing beyond tea and cakes was ever offered, even to their most favoured guest, he determined to satisfy the cravings of hunger before he plunged into this sea of hot water and light food, and in the most

serious tone assured the deputation that he had important letters to write, and consequently could not place himself at their disposal for a full hour. The gentlemen who had thus waited on him looked somewhat disappointed, and half inclined to remonstrate, but George, calling up his most bland smile, held out his hand, and warmly grasped the rough paw of each person present, and by an occasional good-natured observation dismissed for a while the white-neckclothed group in high good-humour.

Sydney now retired to another room, where he ordered some paper and a pen and ink to be brought; not that he really wanted them, but to carry out his assertion made to the deputation. He also ordered a light dinner and a bottle of Clicquot's champagne to raise his somewhat drooping spirits, for, to confess the truth, he

felt no triumph in his present ovation. He had suddenly quitted town to avoid an immediate meeting with his brother; he feared an explanation relative to his wronged sister-in-law, and therefore (as he expressed it in his note to the peer), he had left town on important business, that is to say, he had gladly accepted the invitation of the pious tea-drinkers of Leeds, and, in accordance with that acceptance, now sat in the principal inn of the second town in Yorkshire.

To appear engaged in epistolary affairs, he sat down and wrote three or four notes—notes of no consequence—which he addressed to some of his numerous friends, on indifferent matters. At last, an idea seemed suddenly to strike him; he seized a sheet of note-paper, and wrote thus:—

"Let me know all by return of post,

addressed to me here; I shall await your reply. Mind tell me, but in ambiguous terms.—Yours, "GEORGE."

He then carefully placed it in an envelope, and addressed it to "Mrs. Thompson, Housekeeper, Grantchester House, Fulham." This done, he called for the boots, and desired him to take an especial trip to the post-office with his letters. He next partook of a hasty meal, and, having adapted his dress to the feelings of those whom he was about to join, he returned to the principal saloon, there to await the return of the deputation. In less than a quarter of an hour, the undertakerlike-looking group returned, each bearing a long white wand; but few words were exchanged; they formed a sort of procession, preceding and following Sydney, and in this order conducted him to a large hired vehicle,

into which he entered with the leaders of the band. To his great horror and disgust, a temperance band, with several appropriate banners, marched in front of the carriage; at least a dozen hackney-coaches, containing members of the society and their wives, followed. The usual crowd on such occasions was not wanting, and the elegant and fastidious George was more than once called upon to thrust out his hand to shake that of some greasy butcher or dirty fish-fag. Sydney was, however, far too accomplished an actor to show outwardly the disgust he inwardly felt.

Never in his life did George Sydney more thoroughly entrance his audience. When he spoke of the idolatry (as he called it) of the Romish Church, every man in the company became an iconoclast; not an individual among them but would have risen and joined in a general de-

struction of images, fonts, and even the crucifix itself, so madly did he raise their ire against their Papist brethren. When he spoke of the primeval Presbyterian simplicity, and their abhorrence of our sacred instruments, half the assemblage would gladly have thrust organs from their churches, and insisted on their keeping Christmas-day as a day of prayer. The unbelieving few, they cried aloud, should be compelled to acknowledge our common Redeemer or they should be hunted from our shores. Calming at one moment their angry passions, at another he would raise them to the very height of fury. He played with their feelings as though they were children; he commanded their creed and their belief as a talented mob orator would command the opinions of a political assembly; he felt his power, and, as their excitement increased, so did his eloquence. When he

touched on their modest yet happy state, every male present blessed himself and glorified his high position as a Leeds clothworker; when he spoke of their homes and hearths, the females cried, and laughed, and waved their dingy pocket-handkerchiefs; when, adverting to their religious state, he emphatically assured them they were all lost past redemption, the old ladies gloried in it—many of the younger ones were carried out fainting; and when he finally called on them to subscribe, every pocket was emptied into the begging-box, and already it might be said Bethesda's additional wing was already expanded.

After such an orator, no man present dared to address the meeting; it would be like sipping spring-water after drinking generous port; it is true an old lady tried to make a speech, but she was coughed down. The principal churchwarden of

Bethesda proposed a vote of thanks to George Sydney in a neat and appropriate speech—a proposal seconded by the whole company, and the proceedings closed by one of the ministers of the favoured chapel calling on the company to sing a hymn, rendered peculiarly appropriate to the present occasion, as it had been paraphrased in order to introduce the heavenly advantages of temperance, tea, and charity.

The hymn was sung; George was reconducted to his hotel in torchlight triumph. The temperance band, however, were far too inebriated to lead the way; they had waited at a neighbouring public-house during the banquet, the *smell* of beer and spirits had probably affected their heads, accustomed only to water; at least, so said the gentlemen who rode in the same carriage with the orator.

On arriving at the "White Horse," the

lion of the day bade his companions good night, and retired to his room. The greater number of those whom he thus left turned into the smoking-room, and there painted in glowing terms the powers of the orator who had come down from London. So earnest were they—so absorbed in the theme of praise, that most of them forgot the potentiality (as Dr. Johnson would say) of the liquor they were imbibing, and unconsciously became so tipsy, that the boots and the two ostlers were compelled to escort them, one by one, to their respective homes.

George was too excited—for, though he did not feel or believe a word he had uttered, the energy he had displayed being rather the offspring of will than the spontaneous effusion of the heart—to retire at once to his couch, so he gradually calmed himself by reviewing the past (positive)—the future (uncertain). Con-

science—reproving conscience—had long forsaken the soul of George Sydney, so he smiled as he laid his head on the pillow and dreamt of that innocence he had bartered for a life of hypocrisy and crime.

CHAPTER VI.

LEEDS AND THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

George rose early and strolled through the town before breakfast—a less interesting one had seldom met his view. Not a public building worth gazing at—not a handsome square, nor the shadow of a park. To breathe freely, the inhabitants of this overgrown village must seek the suburbs, for throughout the town itself nothing of the kind was to be found. Its inhabitants, employed in their various factories and mills, left the streets bare of passengers. To George's eye, used to the crowd which continually throngs the British metropolis, it seemed like a vast desert, without a solitary oasis to enliven

the view. After about an hour thus spent, the great orator returned to his inn and partook of an ample meal; for be it well understood, talking is a great provocative of appetite, and consequently great orators are generally great eaters. They may not, it is true, be gourmets, but they are almost invariably gourmands.

His meal over, the waiter announced that three gentlemen, representing the whole of the deputation of the day before, wished to see Mr. Sydney in the great saloon. George at once arose and followed the servitor, who led him into the presence of the official visitors.

After a cordial shaking of hands—for the plebeian order do most sincerely love on all occasions to grasp the paw of an aristocrat—the spokesman at once addressed his brother orator, as he delighted to call him when speaking of him :—

"Eloquent Sir, I represent the deputa-

tion who had the honour of calling on you yesterday. Our numbers would have been greater, but the fact is, some of our members are indisposed, others so overcome by your wonderful powers of speaking, that they are unable to attend this morning."

Here one of the trio winked at the waiter—an intimate friend of his—and in a side whisper muttered—"They haven't recovered their booze: it was a smasher!" The chairman proceeded:

"Yes, sir, your powerful oratory has had an effect which will be long remembered in this respectable and populous town. I have much pleasure in announcing to you that, through your Herculean efforts, we last night collected the sum of three hundred and nine pounds, four shillings, and threepence; leaving a clear profit of one hundred and fifty pounds, after paying the expenses of

the procession, the delightful temperance band, and the refreshments so necessarily required by the deputation, the standard-bearers, and others. And we now come, sir, to offer to you a small sum to cover your travelling expenses, which we pray of you graciously to accept, with this letter of thanks, written on parchment and engrossed by the Mayor's chief clerk;" and he handed a large letter and a small purse containing twenty pounds to George Sydney.

Our pious friend received with due humility and a slight show of reluctance the cash thus offered; but as his funds were low, and he could not ask for a fresh supply till he saw his brother, he coolly pocketed the offering, and returned his thanks in a seemingly warm but really cautious manner, for he sorely dreaded he might again be called upon to amuse the greasy multitude of the evening before.

The representatives of the representatives still lingered, although Sydney had bid them adieu. The hero of the preceding day felt puzzled at this, and could not divine why they thus lingered; the waiter, however, sidled round, and in a whisper solved the riddle. Our orator at once adopted the hint, glad to get rid of these bores at any price.

"Waiter!" cried he aloud, "serve refreshments to these gentlemen; let them have everything they desire;" and with a bow which would have done honour to George the Fourth, he quitted the saloon.

"Bring us some beefsteaks, some cold roast-beef and some beef sausages, with potatoes and some cabbage, if you've got any boiled; some of the old ale as you serve on rent-days; a bottle of gin and one of brandy; and ask Mr. Robson, the manager, if he'll come and join us."

"And I say," chimed in a second, "don't uncork the bottles afore you bring them up—we likes to water our liquor ourselves."

"A thimble of rum," squeaked the third, who was a tailor by trade, "wont hurt us; and don't forget the cabbage."

"Can we have it in the bar parlour?" asked the first speaker.

"Not exactly," replied the man.

"Well, then, serve it here; and if you only gets Robson to give us the old ale—you know which I mean—we'll give you a shilling. So cut, Jemmy, and let's have our dinner—it's nearly twelve o'clock, and I'm precious hungry."

The waiter disappeared to obey the orders given him.

The deputation, now dropping their courteous manner, began talking their future plans over, but not without squab-

bling who should build the projected wing of the chapel, since each was bribed by different builders to give him the contract. Harmony, however, was restored by a general agreement to share the proceeds equally among them; and now they decided not to employ their most talented friend, but he that would give them the largest discount; the facts to be confined to the knowledge of the trio present.

In the meantime Sydney had returned to his room. Here a groom awaited him. He brought a note from Sir William Putnam, of Besborough Priory; he was desired to bring a reply. George at once opened the missive; it contained a pressing invitation to dine that day with the worthy baronet, as well as the offer of a bed, should he determine on sleeping there. There was also a proposal for a day's shooting.

The pet of Exeter Hall did not reflect

long. Sir William was a distant cousin of his own; he was a man of large property, and possessed an only daughter, said to be extremely pretty, who would inherit his great wealth. He gave good dinners, and might assist Sydney, should the latter now determine on following a political career. "Besides," mentally argued he, "if I don't get away from this abominable inn, I shall be again tormented by these horrible admirers of mine; and yet I cannot leave Leeds before to-morrow, as I must await the reply of Mrs. Rearden. It is just possible London may be rather too hot to hold me just now; or, on the other hand, I may be wanted there; hence I can't budge till I receive the old hag's letter. There can be no hesitation—no doubt on the subject; I'll accept Sir William's invitation." So desiring the groom to be well treated while he wrote a reply, he sat down and penned a

civil acceptance, taking care to commence his letter with "Dear Cousin," and ending it by an assurance that he was his "attached relative and friend."

The note sealed—for George was far too gentlemanlike to make use of saliva in closing his epistle—the groom was summoned, and the reply despatched.

Scarcely had Sir William's messenger departed, when a lady who declined sending in her name was ushered in. She was closely veiled and muffled up in a large cloak, but the manner in which she entered the room and took a chair plainly betrayed to Sydney that his visitor was a lady; her language proved her to be a person of education, but her cold and distant manner forbade him to indulge in the hope which had at first sprung up in his breast, namely, that it was a personal conquest he had made, and that in the female before him he saw

an additional triumph, flatteringly to swell the long catalogue of fair creatures willingly transformed into "stricken deer" by the magic of his glance.

The servant having left the room, the lady, without hesitation, at once addressed him—

"You may think it strange that I, as a stranger, should thus visit you, and perhaps that astonishment may be increased when I assure you that I intend to leave you in a few minutes without stating my name or revealing my features."

"Oh, madam!"

"Don't interrupt me; only allow me to utter a few words and I will leave you, nor further interrupt your more important affairs. Suffice it to say, for reasons of my own, I am anxious to do good. Perhaps I have sinned and wish to purchase my pardon; perhaps I am

rich and charitably inclined, but have no good opportunity of dispensing my alms. Perhaps——but stay," added she, interrupting herself, "all this is nothing to do with you: it is the act, not the motive, I desire you to approve. I have heard you continually visit the poor and relieve the distressed; I therefore constitute you my almoner. Will you accept the office for once?"

"Yes."

"Well then, here are fifty sovereigns," and she handed him a small purse filled with gold—"yes, here are fifty sovereigns; distribute them amongst the deserving poor, and when they are gone write and tell me so, addressed to Z. Z., Post Office, Hunslet, Leeds, and you shall have a further supply. Nay, no thanks; I give them to the poor and needy, not to you. Don't move—don't ring the bell, I know

my way well; I would rather not be observed;" and the next moment she had disappeared.

"Well, that's just what I wanted; it will stop Marham and Jameson's mouths. I've not made such a bad trip, after all. If I happen to win the heiress I'm a made man. I'll make my peace with Heaven and become a saint in reality;" and our Tartuffe chuckled at the bare idea.

Another female was now announced, and George already fancied he grasped within his palm a second purse, when a wretched woman, leading a sickly-looking child, tottered rather than walked into the room.

The unfortunate creature was evidently in the last stage of consumption. Her dress was clean, though denoting the most fearful poverty. Her pale cheeks and sunken eyes revealed a tale of woe in

more forcible terms than the most fearful words could express. George for a moment was really shocked, and rose from his seat as the poor sufferer dropped into the nearest chair and burst into a flood of tears. When she recovered her composure and her speech she turned to Sydney and faintly exclaimed—

"Oh, sir, have mercy on me!"

The astonished scion of nobility seemed for a moment lost in wonderment; then, resuming his seat, and at once reading the mission and object of the poor woman's visit, calmly demanded what he could do for her.

The distracted female threw herself on her knees and implored the good man's assistance. Her history was short; it was one of every-day occurrence. Her husband had been killed in a mill; her eldest child was now lying ill of a dangerous fever. To support the poor infant

she had sold every object she possessed. She was now starving. Alas! the curate of her parish had given her five shillings, but that was spent and gone. The charitable doctor, who had visited the sufferer gratuitously, had told her that her darling must die unless it had certain comforts—certain luxuries. He had left her wretched lodging telling her this, yet offering no aid to procure them. Yes, her child was dying, certainly dying, unless she could get a few shillings. She had heard that a great and good man from London was in the town, and she now visited him to implore his aid. A few shillings would save the life of the child; without them the poor little creature must die."

George Sydney seemed greatly moved at her recital. At the close of it he arose and addressed her—

"My good woman, my heart bleeds

for you—but alas! I have no means of assisting you. My constant donations given in charity—the frequent calls on my purse—leave me really penniless. I can only recommend you to appeal to the parish authorities, and to those kind friends who live in Leeds. Do this to-morrow."

"Oh, sir, good sir, charitable sir, my child will be dead ere that, if no relief arrives."

"I am indeed afflicted. I would fain stay the stroke of fate which hovers over your dear child. I will do all I can do, and I truly regret the offering is so small; but it is all I can spare."

"Heaven bless you! Oh, dear, dear sir, the child you save shall be taught to bless your name and nightly pray for you."

George Sydney rang the bell.

"Show this poor woman out," said he to the waiter, and turning to the wretched

applicant he handed her a shilling. Then, turning on his heel, he sought his dressing-room, there to attire himself in the most becoming manner previous to starting for Besborough Hall.

CHAPTER VII.

BESBOROUGH HALL.

THE residence of Sir William Putnam was one of those fine baronial halls which may yet be found in their original form in Yorkshire. Like Temple Newcome and other old castles in the neighbourhood of Leeds, it had been little altered since its original construction. At the back of one of the towers a gaudy conservatory and a lady's dressing-room, it is true, had been added by a widow, who held it during the minority of her son, and a billiard-room had been further appended by the baronet's father. But with these exceptions Besborough Hall remained intact, escaping the hands of

the present Goths, who, like the men of taste in Bruges, would fain cover stone walls with stucco, and whitewash marble figures.

A stately avenue of trees (probably planted when the old hall was built) led from the porter's lodge to the principal entrance; this shady approach was backed by a thick screen of oaks, in which an occasional gap gave the visitor a momentary glimpse of a most lovely and well-cultivated garden beyond it. A sudden sweep in the road (made purposely or not it was impossible to say) gave a momentary view of the fine park at the back of the mansion, well stocked with deer.

Some individuals might have admired the charms of nature for nature's sake. Not so George Sydney. He only reflected that all the property he now surveyed would one day belong to Miss Putnam;

that Miss Putnam was not only single but well looking, and that he (George Sydney) was a bachelor with a winning tongue. Yes, Besborough Hall would make a fine addition to the Grantchester estates.

Arrived at the entrance, our traveller was received by two servitors in old-fashioned livery, and by them passed over to the major-domo, who conducted him across the old banqueting-hall. Here were fixed the old oaken tables and forms which had borne the meals of the household for a couple of centuries at least. Raised by three steps stood the cross table where the old lords of this ancient castle and their immediate family and favoured guests had sat and enjoyed the heavy (and to modern taste coarse) food in which our ancestors indulged. A large window filled with stained glass, displaying the armorial bearings of the

proud race, shed a chequered light on the daïs. Many of the shields which hung on the walls had been borne by gallant knights in tournaments and in combats; many of the wide antlers that graced the walls had been the trophies of the healthy chase in which our ancestors so warmly delighted. Not a single alteration seemed to have desecrated the old hall since those days when gentlemen alternated in their style of dress between steel armour and satin puffs; since ladies wore ruffs and hoops—a curse they have unfortunately handed down to their female posterity.

George almost expected to see some warrior or some queen of the lists arise to welcome him. He turned to the groom of the chambers—or rather he who might in such a building be designated the seneschal—and asked—

"Does Sir William dine here?"

"Occasionally," replied the other, with

a stiff bow, "on rent-days, harvest homes, and high festivals, his worship with his family dine on the daïs. He usually, however, partakes of his evening meal in the dining-room, adapted to the modern fashion as recently as 1719." Sydney smiled at the quaint manner of the old servitor.

The visitor was at length ushered into the presence of his host. He was seated in his study, busily engaged in deciphering some black-letter lore. The library itself was a perfect model, fitted up in dark oak and black marble. The volumes, bearing the stamp of age and respectability, were as different from a modern collection as light from darkness. The light which shone was subdued by one or two panes of coloured glass; a deep silence inclined to reflection, unbroken by the rude noise of a footfall, which was here swallowed up in deep

Turkey carpeting. At a single glance Sydney saw all its perfections.

Sir William at once arose, and after warmly welcoming his guest, put by his book, and conducted him to the drawing-room. Here, except the old ceiling, of which the baronet was justly proud, and a splendidly-carved mantelpiece, everything was modern. The windows were filled by large sheets of plate-glass; the walls were papered and decorated by Crace; the furniture came from Gillow's. There could therefore be no second opinion respecting the beauty of the principal drawing-room at Besborough.

But George cared little for the ornamentation around him; Lady Putnam and her daughter, who at once came forward to receive him, were the sole objects of his gaze. Nothing could exceed the cordiality of their reception.

Lady Putnam was a tall, stiff-looking

personage, whose haughty manner bespoke a pride of family inherent in several of the old Yorkshire families, many of whom look down with contempt on our nobility, pointing out how dukedoms have sprung from pinmakers and woolstaplers, and earldoms from wealthy butchers. Indeed, they seem to have studied the Peerage for the sole purpose of finding out the commercial origin of many a titled race; while not a few have sprung (as they truly allege) from the unbridled passions of our early sovereigns, and thus handed down the right of carrying the royal arms on the carriages of those who owe their first ennoblement to the charms of fascinating actresses.

It is said the French family of the De Rohans were so proud that they adopted the motto—

> "Dieu je ne peut,
> Roi je ne veut,
> Rohan je suis."

There are at least a dozen families in Yorkshire who would, with slight alteration, gladly adopt—feeling themselves fully entitled to it—the above proud legend.

Miss Putnam was the very reverse of her mother. Equally divested of *mauvaise honte* and pride, she advanced, and with a smile which at once entranced him, shook hands with Sydney.

A lovelier girl it is difficult to conceive. A dark, flashing eye—reflecting a happy mind—a glance redolent (if I may so apply the term) of sparkling wit; an eyebrow which, like her wrists and ankles, bespoke pure blood; a pale cheek, and a pearly row of teeth, won the heart—or rather the affections (for he had no heart)—of the entranced guest, who involuntarily clasped the sweet girl's proffered hand with more fervour than strict etiquette would have warranted.

To his delight, no frown checked the bold action. George already looked upon her as won.

The guest happening to express his admiration of the "old mansion," the ladies proposed to show him over the building, while the baronet went to inspect a troop of yeomanry, of which he was the commander.

Had Sydney been less enamoured of his lovely companion, he would have entered warmly into the many historical legends repeated to him by the proud lady of the castle; he would have dwelt with rapture on the views the old Gothic windows afforded; he would have reverentially examined the armour of heroes belonging to the Putnam family—heroes who had fought at Cressy and Agincourt; he would have properly estimated the value of the quilt beneath which Queen Elizabeth had been graciously pleased to

sleep when she condescended to visit Besborough. In a word, he would have shown a proper interest in all he saw, and which, to win Lady Putnam, he should have loudly expressed; but, wholly engrossed by the charms of her daughter, he forgot to offer a proper homage to antiquity, lost in his desire to win the smiles of the clever and seemingly unsophisticated Mary Putnam. At length the inspection came to a close, but not before the sound of a gigantic gong announced that the hour had arrived when every one was called upon to retire to his room and dress for dinner.

"Good-bye, fair coz!" whispered George. "I sincerely hope I may sit next to you at dinner."

"I will take care that you shall," replied the maiden.

Here was encouragement with a

vengeance. The idol of Exeter Hall felt a sense of triumph arise in his breast as he retired to his chamber.

George was proverbially a quick dresser; so, ere he began the task of adornment, he threw himself into an easy-chair, and indulged for at least ten minutes in pleasing reflections.

"What a lovely creature!" He had never seen her equal in beauty: and then her manner—so open, so warm, so candid, and unlike the rigid belles of Belgravia. It is true he had only known her a couple of hours, but a life of happiness seemed to have passed in that short period. He had ventured darkly to hint his admiration; he had poured forth compliments bordering on love-making; yet no repulse—no chilling reply had crushed the sanguine ardour of his hopes; so far from it, she had shown the greatest interest in his welfare. She

had asked him if he was married; she had quizzed him about some ideal lady-love; she had shown him those little attentions which, nothing in themselves, may well be construed into affection, when coupled with a look and manner most encouraging. Her promise to be his next neighbour at the coming meal, all—yes, all—raised his vanity and flattered him into the fond belief that he had only to ask the lovely Mary's hand to obtain it.

But stay; the time was passing—he must at once dress for dinner. He rose, and using more than usual celerity, he completed his toilet just as the gong again pealed through the wide hall, and summoned the family as well as their guests to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DINNER.

THE guests assembled, doubtlessly invited to do honour to Sydney's visit, were not far above the usual average of country society. They sat in a semicircle, evidently awaiting an announcement of the order in which they were to go downstairs. The visitor was duly introduced within the distinguished crescent, and presented to each as "our cousin, the Honourable George Sydney,"—an announcement which elicited sundry low bows from the gentlemen and profound curtseys from the ladies; for be it well understood that the latter genuflexion

has not yet entirely disappeared, as it has in the metropolis.

Lady Putnam addressed a few words in an under-tone to her lord, who noddingly approved of her arrangement, which, in simple truth, consisted in the selection of proper couples, and the precedence each should take.

"You will hand me down, if you please, cousin," said she, approaching and taking the arm of George; "you, as the son of a peer, will take me down. Sir John Manners, will you hand Mrs. Ramsay? Mr. Ramsay, kindly take Miss Penton—Charles, take Mary—and Sir William will give his arm to Lady Deckett."

The arrangement made, the old seneschal or groom of the chambers threw open the wide doors, and preceded the party to the small dining-room.

"You will excuse us taking our meal

in the lesser hall. The fact is, we only yesterday heard of your arrival in Leeds, and had consequently no time to fill the dais tables to do you honour."

"My dear Lady Putnam, you really overwhelm me with kindness. Surely this magnificent apartment, hung with splendid portraits of your ancestors, is handsome enough."

"Handsome, I admit," replied the lady, "but not the place in which we should introduce to our county friends a cousin who has done honour to his lineage!"

George bowed, highly gratified. The mother's consent was doubtlessly secured; he had now only to win the daughter.

Having safely deposited the lady of the house in her proper position at the head of the table, Sydney stood for a moment, anxiously waiting to see who would be placed next to him. To his great delight Mary Putnam threw herself into the

chair, and with a winning smile called on her cousin to "sit down,"—a challenge he instantly accepted, delighted to find himself thus placed between love and honour.

Next to the fair girl, the young gentleman whom Lady Putnam had designated as Charles was seated; and on his right sat Miss Penton. Sir William sat at the foot of the table, facing his proud wife; on his right sat Lady Deckett; then came Mr. Ramsay; a female dependent, or distant cousin, modestly filled the next chair. Mrs. Ramsay was thus compelled to sit next to one of her own sex; Sir John Manners divided her from the mistress of the house.

"Our twelfth seat remains unoccupied in consequence of the absence of Sir George Deckett," apologized Lady Putnam, slowly using her fan.

"He begged of me to assure your ladyship how extremely sorry he was that pressing business prevented him from being here," said Lady Deckett.

"What can't be cured must be endured," chimed in Mrs. Ramsay.

Sydney at once saw that his opposite neighbour, who was a remarkably fine woman, was a vulgarian; and in a glance read the truth that Mr. Ramsay, one of the first men in the West Riding, had, attracted by her beauty, married a person far beneath him in social rank.

Lady Putnam saw the effect, and, somewhat ashamed of her guest, her fan moved more rapidly; for, like most ladies who use this weapon of coquetry, their exact mood may generally be discovered by the motion of it. Calm, dignified, and well pleased, it moves to and fro at a steady pace; anger or extreme pleasure

accelerates its movements in no common degree.

"Cousin George, do try this *vol au vent;* you will find it excellent. Our country neighbours scarcely estimate these cocks-combs, which we receive direct from Paris."

"We've coxcombs enough already, without importing them," loudly chimed in Miss Penton, at the same time bursting out laughing at her own wit.

"Who is that?" whispered George to his fair neighbour.

"A witty spinster—fat, fair, and forty. She wont suit you," replied the other, in an equally confidential whisper.

"What are you whispering about, Mary?" asked Charles.

"Confidential matters," answered the lovely girl. "Pray don't interfere with our flirtation."

"Don't mind her, Mr. Hastings. If

she has the bad taste to snub you, I wont; so let us chat together, and leave them to cozen each other;" and again she chuckled at her own sally.

George scarcely saw any sense in a young man calling the girl he admired by her Christian name. He had heard of Charles Hastings—he was one of the richest proprietors in that part of the country; but, after all, he was only a fox-hunting squire, and perhaps it was the custom of this class to address familiarly young ladies whom they had long known. On the whole, however, he was most grateful to Miss Penton for monopolizing Master Charley's attentions.

"May I take a glass of wine with you, Miss Putnam, if the good old habit is not banished from this part of the world?"

"Oh! by no means; we are quite primitive in Yorkshire. Besides which,

it will give me great pleasure to drink your health; but it must be on one condition;" and the charming creature threw a glance on George calculated to entrance him.

"And that condition?—I could refuse you nothing."

"Oh! the condition is very simple—that you would drop the formal Miss Putnam, and call me Mary!"

"Dear Mary, then, I pledge you in a glass of champagne!" and he swallowed the draught to the dregs.

Charles Hastings suddenly turned from his garrulous neighbour and addressed Sydney—

"I thought you presided at a grand temperance meeting yesterday?"

"Most true," replied George, in a somewhat cold and formal tone.

"Then you appear to have forgotten devilish soon the cause you so eloquently

advocated. Always remember, as Shakespeare says, that—

> "'He who the sword of Heaven will bear,
> Shall be as holy as severe;
> Twice treble shame on Angelo,
> To weed my vice, and let his grow.'"

Sydney blushed and turned away, cursing in his heart the "officious bumpkin," but felt more than repaid for the annoyance when Mary, taking up the cudgels, turned sharply on Charles, and said, in a tone of undisguised pique,—

"My cousin did it to oblige me. He gave up his own wishes to meet mine—it is more than everybody would do."

"Thank you, dear coz; I would gladly again offend, to find so charming an advocate." And warranted as he felt by her frank kindness, he plunged into a regular flirtation with his cousin, who seemed nothing loth to reciprocate his kind feeling.

"Well, if you'll be so gallant, Mr.

Hastings, I shall feel very proud of your escort; but I hope it will cause no jealousy," said Miss Penton, with a somewhat malicious smile.

"I don't care if it does," loudly replied Charles; "besides, I mean to hunt all this week, and the hounds meet close to York to-morrow. They throw off at Ascham Bog."

"You must, however, forego your dignity, and travel second class—I always do so."

"Oh, of course. I'll travel tenth class to secure so delightful a companion."

"Second class!" almost shrieked Mrs. Ramsay; "you cannot surely mean it, Miss Penton! I would not enter such a conveyance for the world. Oh, it's horrible, ain't it, Mr. R.?" added she, addressing her husband.

"For ladies, my dear, it may be disagreeable; but many of our most re-

spectable country gentlemen travel by it."

"Oh, that is horrible! I don't think I could do so if I was whipped for it. I really don't think I'd like to associate with any one who did so."

"My dear Mrs. Ramsay, you are severe. Not only do I often travel second class," said Sir John Manners, "but my wife occasionally does the same. It was only last week we did so, accompanied by Lord Middlemas."

"Well, well, I am surprised! Why didn't you go first class, where you are sure of meeting first-class people?"

"By no means. If you wish it, I will relate to you the incidents of that journey, in order to prove that my assertion is correct."

"Oh, do, do—do so by all means; your stories are always so amusing," put in Lady Putnam.

"Well, there's not much in it, but as you wish it, and Mrs. Ramsay desires to know why I say the second class is equal to the first, I will give it you."

"Miss Penton, leave off your flirting and listen," laughingly chimed in Sir William. "Come, Manners, go on."

The baronet cleared his throat, and went on :—

"I had been staying for some days at the hospitable mansion of Colonel Markham, near Norton Bridge, and was returning thence, accompanied by Lord Middlemas (a very wealthy but particularly quiet nobleman), to my own cottage near Ferrybridge, where his lordship had determined on sleeping *en route* to Doncaster. In his household there had recently been a petty *émeute*, so he had advertised in the London papers for a superior housekeeper. A person dating from Acomb had answered the advertise-

ment, and by my advice Lord Middlemas was now on his way to meet her and inquire into her qualifications. This he preferred doing at my house, as it was far nearer than his own, and he anxiously desired to see her without the intervention of his other servants.

"My wife was of the party, and, from some freak or other, expressed her wish to travel second class. We took our tickets accordingly, and patiently awaited the arrival of the train.

"Presently it came in, when my better half, unconscious of the difference, stepped up to the door of a first-class carriage. The porter, to whom she exhibited her ticket as she requested the door to be opened, in a civil manner pointed out to her her mistake, and showed her where she might find the proper conveyance. At this moment Lord Middlemas and I came up, and, to our intense amusement

(for we are both lovers of the grotesque), saw a fat, red-faced, vulgar-looking woman thrust her head out of the window, and imperiously command the porter 'not to allow her to be troubled again with them there second-class people—it warn't for this she paid her money.' Then pulling up the glass in the most indignant manner, she rolled over to the other side of the vehicle, in order to show her elegant proportions to the travellers standing on the other side of the station.

"At Leeds we found we should be detained some short time, so we left our seats and wandered about the platform, alternately reading the amusing handbills and looking over the thousand-and-one two-shilling volumes here sold by Mr. Smith, the indefatigable railway vendor of books and newspapers.

"Tired of walking up and down, we entered one of the waiting-rooms. Here

was seated, in all the pride of Eastern dignity, our friend the first-class passenger. She was scolding a boy who had brought her a cotton umbrella instead of a silk one:—'John, you've lived as my servant for two years; I should have expected better manners from you. What do you mean by bringing me this here two-and-sixpenny thing? It ain't to lose my best umberella that I paid for your third-class return ticket. Go directly, sir, and get it. Find it at your peril. Here, take this here trumpery—it belongs to some of the lower orders;' and with a look of disdain she threw it at the poor boy, who, looking slyly over his shoulder, picked it up and sneaked off.

"I confess we could not help smiling. This the lady in the bright red roses perceived, and she evidently boiled over with rage, but with a look of malignant satisfaction she turned to the

window and beckoned in a railway porter.

"'Ain't this the first-class passengers-room?'

"'Yes, ma'am.'

"'Then I'll trouble you to tell them people they've no right here—they come in the second class.'

"'Can't do that, ma'am; this waiting-room is meant as much for them as it is for you;' and the porter bolted.

"'Insufferable imperdence!' muttered the indignant fair one as she sailed out to take her place in a first-class carriage, continuing to roar directions to her hapless footboy, in order to attract attention to her aristocratic position. We were all heartily amused.

"After awhile, we safely arrived at our cottage, and while enjoying our luncheon indulged in a hearty laugh at the expense of our late fellow-traveller, whose airs

afforded us a subject of amusement during several minutes.

"The servant now came in, and announced that the expected candidate for his lordship's housekeepership had arrived, and that she had been shown into the drawing-room.

"Lord Middlemas begged us to accompany him and assist in his investigation of the fair damsel's qualifications. We all went upstairs; we entered the modest saloon—when whom should we behold but the first-class passenger, radiant in feathers and flowers. As we entered she looked up; she read in a glance her probable fate; so without uttering a word she jumped up, more wonder-stricken than any individual I ever beheld, and expressing her feelings of annoyance by a low chuckle of discontent, she rushed down the stairs, calling out as she reached the hall—

"'Boy, quick!—bring my umberella!'

"So you see, my dear madam, a second-class passenger may be respectable, and a first-class traveller not belong to the first class of society."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried Sir William Manners, "you have got me out of a sad scrape. When Mrs. Ramsay first denounced the second class I began to feel uncomfortable, for, truth to tell, I often travel by it."

"Well, everybody to their taste, as the old woman said when she kissed her cow; I know I never shall——"

At this moment Mr. Hastings rose, and apologizing for leaving the table, whispered a few words in the ear of Mary, and quitted the room.

"Hem!—my love, had you not better speak to Charley before he goes?" appealed Lady Putnam to her daughter.

"Not I; he has probably a headache,

and wishes to nurse it; or perhaps he wishes to get ready for his hunt to-morrow. I really am too well contented here."

Mamma's fan went to and fro in a hand gallop—she was evidently annoyed; but calming her feelings, she made a bow to Lady Deckett.

The company rose and returned to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER IX.

AN ASSIGNATION.

On re-entering the splendid saloon, they found two or three gentlemen, who had arrived by the train, too late for dinner. There was an Irish M.P., a Manchester millionaire, and a neighbouring divine whose rubicund proboscis announced him as a thorough judge of port wine. The new comers each in his turn saluted their host and hostess, and then mingled with the others, who appeared to be acquainted with them. Tea and coffee were served, and the usual formalities gone through; these over, the party divided into knots, and began eagerly discussing their favourite topics. Sir William was

delighted to have a political chat with the M.P.; Lady Deckett, as a banker's wife, was singled out by the cotton lord; the clergyman listened eagerly to the account of a sale of wines Mr. Ramsay had been present at; Sir John Manners kept up a brisk fire of wit with Miss Penton; Lady Putnam sat near the fire in evident ill humour; Mrs. Ramsay obtruded herself on each group by turns; George, in high good humour, led his "stricken deer" (as he believed her to be) to the centre table, on which splendidly-bound books, photograph albums, and portfolios of statistics were scattered with well-arranged carelessness.

"Who is your favourite poet, Miss Putnam?" asked Sydney. "Longfellow, I should say, from the array of his works here displayed." This he asked to discover whether his intended bride was well educated.

"By no means—the volumes on this table are placed here to amuse our visitors. I have a little library in my dressing-room, where I keep the works of my favourite authors."

"Whom do you, then, prefer?"

"Tennyson. I look upon him as the greatest poet since the days of Byron. Sir Walter Scott has been considered by many to be a smoother, a more pleasing poet, than even Lord Byron himself; but the Laureate, in his 'Idyls of the King,' unites, I think, the grandeur of the former with the flowing verse of the latter."

"Ah, now, Miss Putnam, sure ye're mistaken. Have you forgotten Tom Moore, the poet of poets?" chimed in the Irish M.P.

George in his heart wished the intruder back amongst his constituency for thus interrupting his delightful tête-à-tête.

"None can admire the Bard of Erin more than myself, but I confess a remark I once unfortunately read in one of the Reviews destroyed my high appreciation of his works."

"And what was it, if I may be bold enough to ask?"

"The critic averred that if the sweet flowers and bright gems were taken out of Moore's works they would be little more than nonsense."

The Irish member shrugged his shoulders, and returned to finish his chat with the host.

George Sydney was delighted. She whose personal charms he had so warmly admired had a mind equally attractive; she seemingly loved poetry, and George loved her for doing so.

He now took up the photographic album. It was filled with theatrical celebrities; and here again the fair girl

astonished her admirer by criticising in most minute manner, showing that the wolds of her native county were not more familiar to her than the Italian opera-house, and the various places of aristocratic amusement in London. She could recollect Jenny Lind, and defined her most correctly as the sweetest warbler of the human race. Like every female in Great Britain, she spoke rapturously of Mario; Grisi had each year deteriorated, but was still grand; Piccolomini, a most fascinating and delightful actress, was never as a singer entitled to the rank of prima donna; Titiens was certainly the finest musician that had graced Her Majesty's Theatre for many years; Paul Bedford was her delight, and Toole kept her in a continual roar of laughter; Phelps took the most correct reading of his parts, but his acting was hard; Charles Mathews was one of the finest

and best actors that ever trod the stage. In a word, she astonished her auditor, who did not think it prudent to confess that he was wholly ignorant of the subject she was dilating on, having never publicly entered a theatre, nor enjoyed those theatrical entertainments he had so loudly denounced as a stern and uncompromising Churchman.

Anxious to turn the subject, George took up a beautiful sketch, coloured in most artistic style, representing the Temple of Vesta and the Falls of the Anio, at Tivoli.

"How very beautiful—how exquisitely drawn!"

"You are surely jesting. It is not finished; but, as you seem to think highly of it, I will finish it as soon as I have time."

"What! is this your work?"

"Yes."

"Did you copy it from any particular picture? the colouring is so artistic."

"Not so; I sketched it on the spot, and completed it, as far as it is complete, in Rome."

Sir John Manners, attracted by the loud admiration of Sydney, now approached, and looking at the sketch, turned to Miss Putnam and said—

"Do you know that the temple you have so ably portrayed is English property?"

"Indeed! How so?"

"I'll tell you an anecdote about it."

"I believe you have a story about everything in creation," put in Miss Penton, piqued at the baronet leaving her; "but go on."

"I will. Several years ago, an Englishman of rank was most desirous of collecting the finest gems which were to be procured on the Continent. As well as I

can recollect, the personage in question, a Marquis of Bristol, or a Bishop of Bristol (but I may be mistaken), visited Tivoli, and, enchanted with the pure architecture of the Temple of Vesta, after considerable negotiation managed to become purchaser of the splendid ruin in question. The nobleman or churchman, whichever he was, returned to England, and in a few months after his arrival sent proper persons over to take down the architectural gem he had acquired, and transport it to this country, where he had already chosen a site on which the beautiful temple was to be erected. In his contract of purchase he had, however, forgotten to reserve to himself the right of removal; so when the persons deputed came over, they were unceremoniously told by the representatives of Government, that though the ruin had been sold, that although they fully recognised it as the property

of 'Milor,' there it must remain. It graced the spot on which it stood; none but a Vandal could think of removing it from a spot where alone it called up recollections of the past; in a word, his Holiness the Pope (Pius VII.) refused to sanction the demolition, which would destroy the interest felt by every traveller in visiting Tivoli."

"And who's the Pope, I'd like to know," said Mrs. Ramsay, "who could thus give orders to a British nobleman?"

"He was a *pious* monarch," loudly chimed in Miss Penton, heartily enjoying her own joke.

Mr. Ramsay called the attention of the party to some other subject. George and Mary were alone left at the table.

"Have you any more drawings to show me?"

"Oh, as many as you like. I was always sketching when I was in Italy."

"Were you there long?"

"Three years."

"Then you are well acquainted with the country which produced a Tasso and a Dante? If so, you doubtlessly speak the language—the *Lingua d'amore.*"

"Son quasi Italiana io, e lei, parlate Italiano?"

Sydney had pronounced the only words he knew in the language; he hastened to turn the subject.

"You doubtless, dear coz, are a proficient in music?"

"I play and sing. Indeed, I believe all unhappy spinsters do so."

"Oh, do—do favour me!" And George gave an expressive glance, which he believed to be irresistible.

"Oh, if you wish it, I'll do so with all my heart, though I must tell you beforehand I am but an average performer. Say what shall I sing?"

"Oh, anything you like. Whatever comes from your lips must be delightful."

"Well then, I'll try a German ballad sent me from an old schoolfellow at Mannheim. It is strange, and consequently I like it. Do you know my long residence in Germany strongly prepossessed my mind in favour of the marvellous?"

"Oh, do—do sing it. I shall truly enjoy it." And George hugged himself in a transport of delight as he reflected that his future wife was a linguist and a musician.

The song was entitled "The Page and the Enchantress," and not only afforded an opportunity to Mary of proving herself a first-rate pianist, but an equally fine singer. At its conclusion the pet of Exeter Hall stood really entranced.

"How beautiful!—how touching!—how sweetly touching!" cried he. "What

would I not give to understand the words!"

"It is founded on an old legend—one of the many marvellous tales told, and devoutly believed in, by the dwellers on the Rhine."

"Do you think you could relate it?" asked Sir John; "and if so, would you do so?"

"I believe I could; and really, after the example you have set me this evening I cannot—dare not refuse. So now, ladies and gentlemen, attend. But no—I may forget some part of it; so, if you will allow me, I will read to you the German legend communicated to me by my dear correspondent;" and taking out a letter she thus read:—

"Once upon a time, a young page of the Count Eberstein, named Hugo, was desirous of penetrating into a subterranean passage of the castle of his lord,

which had not been visited for a century, and which was regarded as haunted. After much hesitation, he determined to explore the mysterious spot. Having said his prayers before an altar in the castle, and taken a taper which had been blest by a priest, and had even burnt for some time on the altar, he proceeded to the mouth of the cavern. There he recommended his soul to all the saints he could recollect, and courageously entered the subterranean passage. He had walked a whole hour in this awful place and met nothing but deathlike solitude and silence, when he suddenly found himself in a lofty and spacious apartment. He could not see from whence the light came, but it was so vivid he was forced to cover his eyes with his hands, supposing that he had found the outlet of the passage. He soon, however, perceived that there was no outlet to this vast apartment; and he

began to inspect everything he saw with a silence mingled with some apprehension. The light which had dazzled him proceeded from a crown encrusted with enormous sapphires and placed upon a cushion, supported by a pedestal of white marble; near it was an iron chest about five feet high, and long in proportion; and behind appeared the curtains of a tent or bed. The youth conjectured that treasures had been deposited there in former times by some forgotten people or sovereign, and advanced towards the chest, when a large black dog sprang from behind it, and rushed upon him, barking hideously. Hugo gave himself up for lost, when a gentle voice was heard. The dog returned to the place from whence he had darted, and a lady made her appearance. She seemed to be in the flower of youth, and of the most exquisite beauty; no Greek statue could equal her superb bust,

and her delicate waist was surrounded by a girdle of polished gold, on which were traced some cabalistic characters. Hugo was contemplating her with admiration, when, by a motion of her dress, he perceived that this beauty, whose shape was like that of a goddess, had a serpent's tail. His eyes were clouded, and he would have fallen senseless had he not been recalled to himself by the voice of the mysterious lady.

"'I perceive your terror,' said she, with a gentle accent, and in as pure Latin as was spoken in the time of Augustus, 'and I feel my poor heart failing from shame and agony. Know, young stranger, that I am an unfortunate princess, and am condemned by the arts of a magician to remain in this dungeon for as many centuries as I have lived years, unless set free by a brave and pious youth. I see that you are the individual who is to dis-

solve the charm that confines me here, for you are brave and pious in mind and body. My deliverer, if he has the courage to surmount the horror that my person inspires, must kiss me three times, I shall then recover my natural form; and to reward his generosity I shall accord him my hand, with a portion that will make him the richest and the happiest man in the world.'

"When the princess had thus spoken, she fixed her beautiful eyes on Hugo with such an expression of tender supplication that the youth, attracted by an irresistible charm, was going to throw himself into her arms, but the hideous scales met his view, and he felt his limbs paralysed with horror.

"'Do you love money?' exclaimed the lady, with vivacity; 'do you wish for power?' and opening a chest, she showed him it was filled with gold pieces.

"The sight of the coin encouraged Hugo. He sprang (not without shuddering) into the arms of the princess, and imprinted a kiss upon her lips. At the same moment a great noise resounded through the cavern, confused voices filled the air, and a dismal groan, repeated in echoes through the passage, made his heart palpitate with terror. His audacity, however, was attended by no fatal consequences; and though much disconcerted, he was preparing to give the second kiss, when the scales of the tail again met his view.

"Almost sick with horror and disgust he would have fled, had not the unfortunate princess, with a cry of despair, implored him to have pity on her. The tears which filled her eyes seemed to add to her beauty; the page was unable to resist them, and kissed her for the second time. Thunders again shook the cavern;

on every side were heard fresh groans mingled with horrible laughter; the black dog renewed his barking, and the serpent's tail struck the ground with such violence that it trembled as with an earthquake. Hugo could not muster courage to remain, but taking a last look at the princess, he turned and fled.

"'Oh, do not leave me!' cried the lady, in accents of despair. But the youth fled as if he was pursued by all the demons of the Hartz mountains. 'Have pity on me, for the love of all you hold dear!' But Hugo stopped his ears with his hands and continued his flight. 'Mercy—mercy—mercy!' The voice then became weaker, and at length died away.

"When the page regained the mouth of the passage and again emerged into daylight, he sank with exhaustion and fell asleep; after which he arose and returned to the castle of Eberstein. His

adventure of the morning appeared to him as a dream; but the gold pieces with which the lady had filled his pockets proved to him its reality, and a burning thirst reminded him that he had neither eaten nor drank the whole day. 'Wine, wine!' were the first words he uttered; and when his astonished companions had presented him several glasses, he conceived such a sudden fondness for the liquor that a part of his money was soon spent in copious libations. This taste soon led to every sort of extravagant pleasures; these excesses quickly enervated his strength and depressed his spirits; a malediction seemed to attend on the fatal treasures he had obtained, and when the last coin was spent he fell into poverty and disgrace. He again and again attempted to find the awful passage; but he has ever failed, and he is said even now, as a spirit, to haunt the spot with vain lamentations."

"Such is the subject of the strange song and the wild melody I have just given you. Translating it, as I read, from the German language, it has perhaps lost some of the force of the original, but this you must pardon," added Mary, with one of her sweetest smiles.

"Well, I don't believe a word of it," cried Mrs. Ramsay. "I went up the Rhine as you call it, and I never saw anything of the kind."

Conversation now became general.

The clergyman earnestly invited George to attend his church on the following Sunday, but the latter declined the invitation, pleading the necessity of leaving Yorkshire on the following day on urgent business, as an excuse for not accepting the otherwise welcome engagement.

"Oh, I hope you are not going to leave us so soon, Cousin George," said Miss Putnam.

"I regret to say business compels me."

"And can you come back soon—say in a fortnight?"

"If you invite me to do so, certainly."

"Well then, expect my summons. He must come, must he not, mamma?"

"Oh, decidedly," graciously replied Lady Putnam.

George now felt he had nothing to do but to propose, to secure the charming girl's hand. The mother's consent was already certain; Sir William would probably not object. Emboldened by this belief he whispered to Mary, as they separated for the night, "Dear coz, will you meet me in the garden after breakfast in the morning?"

"With the greatest pleasure. In the lower garden, if you please." And away went the entrancing girl.

Sydney, for the first time in his life, felt something like real love.

CHAPTER X.

PRIDE HUMBLED.

If the reader has ever been a successful wooer, he may possibly understand the feelings of George Sydney as he laid his head on his pillow for the first time in Besborough Hall. On reviewing the events of the day, he was bound to be content. Every scene of that period was pictured *couleur de rose*, and the great man's pride and self-love were flattered, and he began in earnest to think of reforming his ways, and becoming in *reality* that which he had hitherto been only in *appearance*. Blessed with fortune, wedded to the loveliest, the most ingenuous of her sex, he would proudly

enter Grantchester House, and astonish by his splendour and magnificence the worthy peer. Hitherto he had been his brother's dependent, and he cordially hated that brother for his liberality; every fresh gift was a fresh grievance. Yes, he would yet live to tell him he was no mere pensioner. He calculated, from an old knowledge of Sir William's affairs, that his spare timber was worth at least £40,000. This would more than pay his son-in-law's debts; and if he refused this supply, Mrs. Rearden might be introduced into Besborough Hall, and the baronet's early death—which *of course* he would deeply regret—would leave him the undisputed master of estates worth £15,000 a year. Mary, though lovely and accomplished, was perhaps a very little—the shadow of a shade—too fast. He would correct her, and bend her to his will. Yes, a man

who, like Cæsar, had but to "come, to see, and to conquer," could do all he liked; and the delighted lover fell into dreams which some might expect would be the reflex of his waking feelings. But it was not so. He was arrested and carried off to some dreadful cell, to await his trial for murder! Here, after a time, he was discovered by dear Mary, who, touching the prison-bars, at once released him, and bore him to the well-known cottage in St. John's Wood, where, suddenly raising the veil which hid her face, she disclosed the features of Lady Urmstone, who, after pouring forth a torrent of reproaches, touched him with her icy hand, and he at once felt himself in the agonies of death. Placed in a coffin, he was borne to the church in which he had been christened—angels were about to claim him as their own—when suddenly the sacred edifice became pitch dark—

a thousand horrible creatures danced around his bier, while a voice loudly demanded—"What hast thou to do here, thou wicked hypocrite?" The demons then approached, and would have dragged him forth, but George struggled lustily, and in that struggle awoke.

The morning was far advanced when Sydney opened his eyes. His watch showed him that it was half-past seven, and it had been formally announced to him that the family breakfasted at nine. He had a long, an important, and a pleasing page to write in his diary—a diary in which he carefully inserted not only every event that occurred, but also his every feeling on the various occasions. He also wished to be very particular in his toilet, so he at once left his bed, well knowing he had no time to lose.

Three white neckcloths were sacrificed before George was thoroughly content

with his tie; at least ten minutes were bestowed on shaping his nails; his hair was brushed till it shone like black polished marble. Mrs. Madden's tooth paste rendered his teeth brilliantly white; a *soupçon* of eau-de-cologne was rubbed on his chin after shaving. In a word, he set off his handsome face and fine person to the best advantage ere he left the room.

Thus armed for conquest, he entered the breakfast-room—a beautiful apartment, filled with exotics, and opening on the lawn. Here sat, evidently awaiting his arrival, the host and hostess, with their fair daughter, Sir John Manners, Miss Penton, and Mr. Charles Hastings. As soon as George entered, Sir William requested him to read prayers, which he did in a sonorous voice, and in that emphatic manner which at once accounted for the estimation in which he was held

by what is called the *Low* Church party.

After this proper introduction to the business of the day, the letter-bag was opened and the contents distributed, and then they at once sat down to breakfast.

Little or nothing new was brought forward; nothing worth recording passed. The only thing which puzzled and annoyed Sydney was the intimate terms on which Charles Hastings appeared to be with Mary Putnam, who, instead of showing the utter indifference and coldness she had exhibited towards him at dinner on the previous day, now seemed to have transferred all that open kindness to him which she had bestowed on Sydney the day before. The consequence was that George set her down as a regular coquette, and determined on telling her so, and threatening not to seek her as a wife.

Everything must come to an end—even a country breakfast must arrive at a conclusion. This period arrived, and each party strolled away, to follow their various amusements or vocations.

Having put on his hat and given an extra finish to his toilet, George Sydney strolled forth; and having ascertained the way from one of the gardeners, he at once directed his footsteps to the lower garden.

It was empty; not a soul was perceptible within its high walls, which were admirably calculated to screen its occupants from observation. George remarked this with pleasure, and mentally thanked his fair syren for having cunningly selected such a place of meeting. For some time he walked up and down, in anxious fear lest Mary might not keep her appointment, when, joy!—joy!—she suddenly came in by a side door which he

had not observed. Need we add that Sydney, in ecstasy, rushed to meet her?

"Dearest girl! a thousand thanks for thus coming to meet me. You know not what hopes—what presumptuous hopes—it encourages."

"Upon my honour, beyond the hope of a pleasant walk, I am unaware of any."

"Oh! do not play with my feelings; do not jest on a subject so serious."

"You speak in enigmas. To what serious matter do you allude? You asked me to walk here, and here I am,—I did not know you wished me to speak on serious matters. If, however, it is any distress I can alleviate—any charity within my power—I will."

"Oh! it is both. It *is* a case of deep distress, which your charity can alone relieve."

"Cousin, cousin! speak in plain English, and I'll as plainly answer you."

"Can any one overhear us?"

"None but the robins. But why this mystery?"

"Well then, I will at once unbosom myself to you;" and he led the puzzled girl to a seat in an ornamental summer-house. "Yes, I will be candid—I will be frank."

"Do, Cousin George. I like frankness."

"Well, then, dear girl!" cried Sydney, carried away by the violence of his passion, and dropping on one knee, "I love you—I adore you. I, who never bowed before a mortal yet, beseech you on my bended knees to accept my hand and heart!"

Mary burst out laughing.

"Cousin George, you'll make me die with laughing!" cried she, as soon as she could speak. "Bravo! bravo!—you would make an excellent actor."

George started up.

"Miss Putnam, I do not understand this merriment. Do you mean to insult me?"

"Do you mean to say that you are serious?

"On my soul I am!"

"What! Love at first sight?—fallen in love with your country cousin's charms at dinner, and in twenty-four hours fast dying of love!"

"You are pleased to be satirical."

"Not so; I wish only to be rational; and I had hoped, from what they told me of you, that you would have been the same."

"I am rational—I am perfectly so, although the ardour of my passion——"

"Now, do—do drop this inflated style and descend to common sense. Tell me if you have utterly lost your senses. What part of my conduct justified you in

believing that I was thus lightly to be won?"

"Did you not encourage me? Did you not receive with apparent pleasure and reciprocate every feeling I expressed, last evening?"

"Yes; I admit it."

"You acknowledge it. Tell me why, then, this sudden change."

"For the simplest reason possible. Charley and I had a difference — a lover's quarrel—and I flirted with you to annoy him."

"Thank you for your preference."

"Oh! there's no gratitude due. I should have shown as much to any one else who had happened to drop in."

"Then you made me a mere butt—a stalking-horse; you considered me a fitting person to be fooled?"

"Exactly."

"Miss Putnam, such heartless conduct

I have never met before, nor am I in the habit of being treated so lightly."

"And do you mean to say you were vain enough to think you had won my heart in a single interview? For shame, Mr. Sydney!—you have really too high an opinion of yourself."

"It is more than I can be accused of respecting——"

"Your country cousin," interrupted Mary. "Oh yes, I know all this—I'm used to be found fault with. Charley often chides me."

"And who is this Mr. Charles Hastings, for whom you so unblushingly express a preference?"

"Charley! What, did you not know it? How very odd! I really thought I had told you. I am to be married to him next month."

"What a fool I have made of myself!" groaned Sydney.

"Rather," laughingly put in Miss Putnam.

"To be thus led on and tricked by a mere country coquette. I know not what could have induced me——" continued he in an undertone.

"But I do," cried Mary, catching his words. "It was vanity — pure vanity. You are a spoiled pet of the world—one who thinks himself the cleverest and the most irresistible man in creation—one who looks down upon poor, unsophisticated Yorkshire girls. Now, I am a plain, simple, and straightforward person, free in my manners, and no adept in dissimulation. You mistook open-hearted candour and the affectionate manner of a relative for love and admiration. For shame, Cousin George! I fear you are very vain."

"Mary, listen to me. By Heaven——"

"Stay, stay — here's dear Charley;"

and with a light bound she started from the summer-house, and the next moment stood smilingly linked under the arm of her intended. "Ta-ta, cousin!" cried she. "I wont tell—honour bright, I wont. But don't forget what I said. I'll send you a formal invitation to our wedding. Charley dear, George Sydney has half promised to be present."

"If not inconvenient to him, my dearest Mary, we shall be most happy to see him," and Charles gave a stiff and somewhat haughty bow.

"Once more, ta-ta," cried Mary, and dragging Charles Hastings away, she quickly left the garden.

"May every ill befal them! To be foiled and humiliated by a heartless coquette—a bumpkin squire! Oh, it is too degrading. Here am I, George Sydney, the idol of the opposite sex, the envy of my own—the man who never yet suffered

mortal creature to cross his path uncrushed—am I to stand here and tamely put up with such an insult? No, no—they shall not be married; they shall rue the day they offended me. Yes, I solemnly swear I'll be revenged. The proud girl shall yet upon her knees sue for pardon, and I will spurn her—ay, the thought is sweet!" And with this concluding reflection Sydney again sought the house.

Too much vexed to encounter the family, unable to account for his sudden flight, anxious to be guilty of some incivility which would alienate him from their future acquaintance, Sydney rang the bell, and desiring the servant to bring him a post-chaise from the neighbouring village, he at once packed up his things, without asking the usual aid of a valet. He threw into his portmanteau his diary, determining not to sully its pages by re-

lating the scene which had just occurred; and leaving a very brief note, stating that he was compelled to leave Besborough Hall by important business, adding no civil line of thanks or explanation, he jumped into the vehicle and instantly started for Leeds—if not a better, at least a wiser man.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LETTER OF RECAL.

THERE are few situations more unpleasant than that of travelling in a wretched post-chaise in these days, when railroads offer us comfort, celerity, and punctuality—more particularly when one is flying from scenes rendered hateful by some crushing event. Yet in this identical predicament did Sydney now find himself, as he slowly rolled over the ten miles which lay between Besborough Hall and the town of Leeds. It is true he had traversed the same distance only twenty-four hours before without feeling himself weary or the distance great; but now it seemed interminable—so wide is the distinction

between seeking happiness and flying from disappointment.

Change in his fortune may wound the millionaire; reverses in political aspirations may be deeply felt, and love rejected (as in the present case) may agonize a sensitive bosom; but none of these could come up to the annoyance which George felt—the envenomed pains he now endured. To a proud man—to one who has never yet been checked in his wild career—a sudden and unexpected humiliation is worse than death itself. Poverty, pain, and even bereavement might be borne; but in the very moment of triumph to be scorned—to be scorned by a mere girl of eighteen or twenty—to be laughed at and lectured by such a being, was more than Sydney could well endure—yet endure it he must.

And then, again—who could say—might not Miss Putnam, in the pride of

her heart, reveal what had passed? Already she had probably told it to her lover, who would long ere this have repeated it to all his friends, even adding exaggeration to the already painful picture. Sydney began to regret that he had not stood his ground, and, if the subject had been broached, boldly denied the whole affair, or declared it to be a joke. It was now, however, too late to return, so he had only to make the best of it.

In about two hours the crazy vehicle reached Leeds, and deposited the angered orator in his former quarters, where all the household—including waiters, chambermaids, and boots—declared that the London gentleman's visit to Besborough Hall had done no good to his temper.

Three letters only awaited Sydney on his arrival. The first—a large and important-looking missive—informed him

that a deputation would wait on him immediately on his return, and conduct him in due form to the chapel, where, after proper service, his opinion would be taken relative to the various plans proposed for building the new wing.

George threw the letter aside with an angry ejaculation. In a moment his mind was made up. He would not let them know of his arrival, and thus elude their unwelcome civility.

The second was a note, only just brought to the house by a groom from Besborough Hall. The man still waited for an answer.

This rather pleased the affronted wooer. It soothed his angry feelings, since it doubtless came from Mary, apologizing for her conduct in the garden, or from Sir William, pressing him to return—an invitation, truth to tell, he felt half inclined to accept. Even if he lost the

daughter, he still might turn the riches of the father to a profitable account. His pride would be satisfied by the baronet's explanation—his avarice gratified by extorting some of his wealth. All these ideas flashed across Sydney's mind as he tore open the note. It ran thus:—

"SIR,—As I have reason to believe that you feel yourself aggrieved by the behaviour of Miss Mary Putnam—who tells me you had the egregious presumption to mistake the artless affection of a near relative for a feeling which none but a senseless egotist could have mistaken for anything more tender—I hasten to assure you, as the intended husband of your dear cousin, that I am ready, when and where you like, to afford you every satisfaction a gentleman can demand.

"Your obedient Servant,

"CHARLES HASTINGS.

"P.S.—Though Miss Putnam looks upon the whole affair as a mere folly to be laughed at, Sir William views it in a more serious light, and expresses a hope that you will never attempt to approach or to address him again."

George Sydney turned pale, and absolutely shook with rage. He was not a coward by nature, but he had schooled himself to a certain line of conduct consonant with his professed "pious principles." He had in his lectures over and over again denounced duelling. If he now accepted a challenge, he would be for ever discarded by his religious friends. Besides, after all, he had latterly so taken his revenge by means of vile agents and desperate means, that he almost shrank from seeking it now at the risk of that life he had hitherto so tenderly preserved. But, on the other hand, to be stigmatized

as a coward—to be laughed at as a vain fool—to be turned out of a relation's mansion for not knowing how to behave himself—oh! it was hard to bear. It was a bitter pill, even for the idol of Exeter Hall to swallow.

After a short pause and a few moments' reflection, which brought him no consolation, he opened the third letter, which he well knew came from Mrs. Marks (alias Mrs. Thompson). It was thus worded:—

"DEER MARSTER GORGE,—i rite in ansur to your letter jist cum—a many things as happened. The Duv as got out of er cage and cum home. i rites as you dezire in something turms—i don't no the word—butt i understands it. The companion ad better be sent a way. i nevver ears your name, Butt i thinks the suner as you cums the better. Jem is in

Lundon, and groan a grate drunkerd. Cum kwick. "Yours,

"SARAH.

"P.S.—I give'd one dose yesterday."

After a careful perusal of this strange epistle, George discovered the meaning. That Lady Grantchester was meant by the Dove was clear to him; yet how she had escaped—how she had returned to her lord—he was sorely puzzled to discover. The intelligence that Marks had returned (having promised him not to do so for three months) was annoying, and his wife's significant notification of the fact was far from pleasing. Yes—for this and for every reason—he determined on instantly returning to the metropolis, where he could again see Lord Grantchester or lie *perdu*, just as he thought proper.

He hastily rang the bell, and desired

the waiter to bring him a printed telegraph form. This was brought, and he hastily scribbled a telegram to Mrs. Thompson, of Grantchester House, to secure instantly his old apartments in Halfmoon-street, and have all prepared for his reception by the train which arrives in London at 9 A.M. This message despatched, he ordered some refreshment; and just as he was about to sit down to it, the waiter stated that some person wished to see him. Vexed, alarmed, and disgusted, George felt disinclined to see any one.

"Why did you not say that I was out?"

"Because you did not tell me to do so, sir."

"Is it too late? I really wish to be alone."

"Well, I don't think I could well stop 'em now."

"Tell me, then, how long it will be before the London train starts?"

"About half-an-hour."

"Only half-an-hour? I shall scarcely have time to put up my things and take my luncheon. Run down quick, and say I can't see any one."

"It's too late, sir," replied the waiter, as the door was thrown open, and four or five persons, decked out with ribbons, and bows, and sashes, suddenly appeared, and drew up in a row.

The spokesman took one step to the front—

"Honoured sir!"

Sydney expressed his annoyance by a peevish "Pshaw! but go on."

"Honoured sir! We, the representatives of the numerous temperance societies in the borough of Leeds and the adjoining suburbs, two of us being deacons of

the New Bethlehem and Anti-Jerusalem chapels——"

"Do go on faster," impatiently interrupted Sydney.

The orator seemed surprised; but refreshing his memory from a paper which he carried, he continued—

"We, sir, well knowing the stamp which the presence of one so good, so temperate, and so pious as yourself would impress upon the building, are come to escort you in procession to the chapel."

"Oh, hang the chapel! don't you see I'm busy?—I have a thousand things to do."

The deputation stood amazed. But the leader, seeing the humour of the great man, thought it better to remonstrate in gentle terms—

"Oh, sir, do not disappoint us. At least two hundred persons are assembled waiting your arrival at the sacred edifice,

the greater number of whom have paid for their seats."

"Give them back their sixpences"—for by this time George was exasperated by being made a public show—"give them back their money, if you are honest men."

"How, then, shall we support the chapel?"

"Pull it down if you like, and spend the cash in grog."

"What, sir?—you insult us. Do you not know we are sworn to temperance? We will repeat your words to our friends, and——"

Sydney saw he had gone too far; the story might reach London. It was certain to become a good joke at Besborough; so he at once lowered his voice, and added in his blandest tones—

"Gentlemen, believe me I was only jesting; I wished to try you. I thank

you much for the kind forbearance with which you have received my silly joke. It is true I am now busy, but in an hour I will be entirely at your service. In the meantime be pleased to take some refreshment below; order what you like, and I will pay for it as I did yesterday. Waiter, you have heard what I said; repeat my words to the landlord."

The delighted deputation assured George that they had seen through his quiz the whole time, and really estimated it as capital fun. They would return in an hour, and accompany Mr. Sydney to the Anti-Jerusalem Temple in proper order; and with smiles and low bows the men left the room.

George rang the bell, and taking a light meal, paid his bill, and sending for a fly, instantly started for the railway. As he was stepping into the carriage, a smart groom came up to him, and

touching his hat, asked for an answer to the note he had brought from Besborough Hall.

"There's no reply. Tell them all to go to the devil," cried the maddened Sydney; "that's my only reply.".

The disappointed servitor turned away. He had come up with the hope of obtaining a handsome tip, he merely received an insulting message.

George arrived only about three minutes before the hour of starting. He took a first-class ticket and was hurrying to his carriage, when a rude hand was laid on his shoulder. He turned round. It was the spokesman of the deputation.

"Good sir, you doubtless forgot; we are all waiting for you."

"Say I can't come."

"But how account for this sudden desertion?"

"Say I'm all for Jerusalem, and am opposed to Bethlehem; so I cannot sanction by my presence a chapel opposed to the City of the Temple."

"Well, well—but——"

"Oh, no buts—you've heard my determination; and jumping into a carriage, he pulled up the glass. The disappointed deputation then turned away. It now only wanted one minute to four, in sixty seconds he would be clear of Leeds. The door was suddenly opened, and lo! a greasy-looking man thrust in his hand, and presented a piece of crumpled paper, and in a voice of triumph exclaimed to some one behind him—

"I hae cotched him, danged if I arn't! Come, ben, no shuffling wi' me. Stump up, or I'm blowed if I doant drag thee from coach."

"What do you mean, ruffian?" almost screamed Sydney.

"Pay for the liquor you ordered. I zay, friend, I'm Yorkshire; I'm not to be bilked by a Lunnoner."

"How! What do you mean?"

"Look at bill."

Sydney glanced at the paper in his hand; it ran thus:—

"To ales, brandies, and sherries to thirteen members of the Leeds New Temperance Society, four pounds ten."

"May temperance be——"

"Well, ben, there bain't no use in zwearing loike. Pay cash, or come along wi' me."

"There's a five-pound note," said George, offering the fellow a Bank of England note.

"I don't loike taking them Lunnon notes. Harn't ye gotten a Leeds yun?"

"Not I."

The whistle sounded.

"Give me the change," demanded Sydney.

"Next toime, Maister Pulpit-thoomper," roared the ruffian, laughing, as he placed his finger to his nose in a significant manner.

The train was in motion: it was too late to seize him.

The darling of his party leant back, and almost wept with annoyance.

CHAPTER XII.

THE NOBLE STRUGGLE.

Lord Urmstone sat with Lord Grantchester in the study of the latter nobleman, who did not feel himself well. The doctor, indeed, had been called in; but as he found no indications of any particular illness, he had suggested that the sudden agitation caused by the return of Lady Grantchester might probably have deranged his lordship's system, and brought on the present unpleasant symptoms;—and to this opinion Lord Grantchester had bowed.

The conversation of the two noblemen related to the late abduction of Lady

Grantchester, and her equally strange restoration to her home.

"But how does her ladyship account for it? What does she say on the subject?" asked Lord Urmstone.

"Nothing, my dear friend; on that subject she is completely silent. It is in vain I urge her; she refuses to reply."

"Are her lips sealed by any rash vow?"

"Indeed I know not. From her I can elicit nothing; and Scarsdale, who seems to know a great deal about it, is also taciturn when questioned."

At that moment the lawyer about whom they were speaking entered, accompanied by Leslie, whose countenance bespoke the gladness of his heart.

"Scarsdale, my friend," said Lord Grantchester, "Lord Urmstone and myself were forming conjectures relative to the removal—forcible, no doubt—of Lady

Grantchester from the asylum in which she was placed, and her subsequent escape and return."

"It is a painful subject. Take my advice: seek to know no more. The wife you loved is restored to you; why, then, elicit by an unnecessary inquiry, circumstances which might annoy and distress you?"

"I only wish candidly to ask you, Do you know anything about it?"

"Everything, my lord."

"And do you refuse all information to your old friend?"

"I do—not in any spirit of unkindness. There is no other demand in the whole world that I would refuse you; but here I am bound by the most solemn ties. I cannot, will not satisfy you; if I must tell the whole truth, I am not certain, were I free and unshackled, that I would communicate to

you a tale which, without making you one iota happier, might call forth bad feelings—might even render you miserable for life."

"Good Heaven! what do you mean?"

"The mystery thickens," observed Lord Urmstone; then, turning to Leslie, he addressed him: "And you, John,—do you understand this?"

"Partly."

"Then I suppose you may speak?"

"Pardon me; I know not all. Concerning that portion, however, which I do know, my lips are sealed."

"You are too well acquainted with me, Lord Grantchester," said Scarsdale, in a serious tone, "to believe for an instant that I would willingly play with your excited feelings. Lord Urmstone, too, should know me better than to believe that I would maintain an obstinate silence, unless compelled to do so."

Lord Grantchester held out his hand and grasped that of the lawyer.

"I feel that you are right. Excuse my having thus pressed you; let us change the subject. Well, Leslie, my good friend, what brings you and the lawyer here?"

"The most lucky chance in the world, since it finds you and Lord Urmstone here together," replied the captain.

Lord Urmstone looked surprised, and said—

"Well, it is strange; and still more so since I came to talk to Grantchester about you, and to tell him of your approaching marriage with Emily."

"Bless my heart, my young friend, is it so? Oh, you sly dog, you never told me one word about it," said Lord Grantchester.

"I could not, my lord," replied Leslie, "since it was only last evening that my

happiness was crowned by the lady's consent and the approval of her noble father."

"Well, well," said Lord Grantchester, "I suppose I must offer my congratulations on the event, and I do so cordially, although it will rob me of the company of one whose constant society I had hoped would have cheered my few remaining days."

"Not so," quickly put in Leslie; "I will never so far forget your kindness as to abandon you. I will daily call on your lordship, to see if I may be made useful."

"Can I venture, without offending, to offer pecuniary——"

"Not so—not so. Lord Urmstone has already made me independent, and I now come, accompanied by Mr. Scarsdale, to ask his lordship to allow me to settle not only her own fortune on Lady Emily, but

also the property I possess, since it all springs from the generosity of my early benefactor."

"Noble boy! I cannot hear of this."

"Pardon me, my more than father, if I say I insist. Yes, he whom you took from compassion now ventures to oppose you."

"If you really feel the gratitude which I truly believe beats in your bosom, my dear boy," replied Lord Urmstone, "you will no longer do so; on this occasion you must drop your pride."

"Pride—the pride of a beggar's brat towards his benefactor, would indeed be preposterous," murmured Leslie.

Lord Urmstone continued—"I came to my old friend Grantchester this morning for the express purpose of communicating to him the news of your approaching marriage with my daughter, of your promise never to quit me again, but to live under my roof; and lastly, as

it might seem like dependence thus to reside under my roof, to settle £2000 a year on you now, and as much as I can alienate from my title at my death. Come, Grantchester, say, am I not right? Would you not do the same?"

"Were I blessed with a child, indeed I would," replied the other, with a sigh.

"Come, then, Mr. Scarsdale, will you undertake to draw up the deeds?"

"My lord, I shall be delighted to do so; but really I must tell you I had already promised Captain Leslie to——"

"Pooh, pooh! You have heard him acknowledge me as his adopted father; as my adopted son he cannot disobey me, nor thwart the devout wish of my heart."

"My lord—my good lord——"

"Drop this empty—this formal address."

"I submit, then, dear father, since you

bid me call you so. Never, never can I forget your kindness."

How far this affectionate strife would have proceeded it is impossible to say, but at this instant the doctor was announced, and all, save the Earl of Grantchester, quitted the room.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE EXECUTION.

HAL, a small town situated some nine miles from Brussels, was the scene of a fearful murder; a good and charitable old lady had been the victim. The assassin, who had fortunately been taken, was a foreigner. The history of the sad event may be told in a few words:—Madame Van Borsel, an old lady said to be very rich, and much beloved, had, on the death of her husband (who had once been the Burgomaster of Hasselt), taken a small house in Hal, and had here resided, dispensing liberal charities, regularly attending church, and visiting the sick and the bedridden. No

wonder she was, then, generally designated by her neighbours, "the good lady of Hal." About three weeks before the event to which we have alluded took place, a foreigner, in great apparent distress, arrived in the little town, and called on Madame Van Borsel, and told her such a moving tale of want and distress, that she instantly invited him to become an inmate of her house till he heard from England, where he assured the good lady he had considerable landed property—property which would be sold during the following week—when in return he would gladly make a handsome offering at the celebrated shrine of Notre Dame de Hal. Madame Van Borsel was a pious woman—a good Catholic; so she felt pleased at the offer of the foreigner, whom she believed to be a German. A confidence thus established soon ripened into friendship, and the German doctor—

as the people called him—soon assumed a better appearance and a happier look.

One morning, about a week after the stranger's arrival, Madame Van Borsel did not come down as usual to attend early mass. This astonished her servant girl—she had but one; but when breakfast hour arrived, and her mistress did not make her appearance, the servitor began to be alarmed, and bursting open her mistress's door, which, to her great surprise, she found locked and the key removed, she found her mistress lying dead in an arm-chair near her bed, which had not been slept in. The girl, horror-stricken, rushed to the stranger's room, but it was empty. No one was there. The man had evidently gone away. With trembling steps she ran out, and meeting a sergent de ville, communicated to him the startling facts.

The proper authorities were assembled,

and immediately proceeded to the good lady's house. Here they examined the corpse, but found nothing to arouse their suspicions; a garde de ville, however, more sharp than the rest, searched about till he found the old lady's desk. It had been broken open and rifled of its contents. This raised immediate suspicion, and caused a further inquiry. The medical man arrived; he made a proper examination. Their friend and benefactor had been poisoned—she had been murdered! Yet who could have done it? Suspicion immediately fell on her foreign guest, whom they now ascertained had fled some hours before. Retributive justice quickly trod in his footsteps; before the sun set he was taken by the police in a low cabaret in the outskirts of Brussels, and at once conveyed to prison. Within a week he was tried, and the crime brought clearly home to him.

Several papers belonging to the murdered woman were found upon him; a phial which had contained the poison was in his waistcoat pocket. He pleaded that he was a British subject, and should only be convicted (as in England) by a jury partly made up of his countrymen; but this plea was overruled. He appealed to the British minister, but was unable to prove the fact of his being a native of Great Britain. He refused to tell his name. He equally resisted all attempts to learn his antecedents. He, however, had always said he was a German; so as a German (name unknown) he was tried, convicted on the clearest evidence, and condemned to be guillotined on the following day.

This was a startling sentence. Had the crime been less, doubtlessly it would have been commuted, for the sovereign of Belgium is an enemy to shedding blood.

But very few capital executions have taken place during his long reign; nor, indeed, have many been necessary, for in honest candour it must be confessed the Belgians are about the most well-behaved and harmless people upon earth, and well deserve the talented and merciful king who rules them.

At an early hour on the following morning the regular functionaries began to erect the fatal scaffold in the Grande Place, that picturesque square which witnessed the executions of Comtes d'Egmont and Horn, in 1568. From the windows of the Broodt Huys it is said that Alva looked forth on the legal murder of these two patriots. But it is not our province to portray this strangely interesting spot; suffice it to say, that the extraordinary gables which many of the surrounding edifices present are objects as curious to the inquiring traveller

as any monuments he may meet with in the course of his travels in Europe.

Eight o'clock was fixed for the execution, and long ere that period arrived a considerable crowd had collected anxious to behold the rare sight of a decapitation. As usual on such occasions, there was a fair average of the female sex; but no rude conduct, no disgusting levity was displayed, as on similar occasions in England. The assemblage were quiet and serious, and as the prisoner approached they seemed to withhold their breath, awe-struck by the solemnity of the occasion. A procession escorted the culprit, and two judges were said to be amongst the functionaries who accompanied the unhappy man. These high legal dignitaries beheld the last sentence of the law carried into execution from a window prepared for them. Such a rule, if it be so, must have a most salutary

effect, rendering capital punishments less frequent, and restraining the mob from all indecent outbreak.

The wretched prisoner ascended the platform accompanied by the executioner and his aids—a priest also attended him—while within the line of horse gens-d'armerie who surrounded the scaffold, stood an officer of the Church, holding aloft exactly opposite, and in view of the culprit, a large crucifix, to which the figure of our dying Saviour was affixed.

We will not enter into details—we will not dwell on the horrors of the scene; the unfortunate murderer was, however, recognised by a female in the crowd. She screamed loudly to him. He for a moment seemed to feel a pang, a strange pang, for hitherto he had shown the greatest indifference; then turning to the executioner he cried, as he saw the

female approaching — "Quick! quick! despatch me before she arrives!" In a moment more he was strapped to the fatal plank—the plank was tilted down and pushed forward till the head was grasped within the fatal circle — the executioner touched the spring—a dull sound was heard as the unflinching axe fell, and the head rolled into the basket prepared for it.

Thus ended the career of Dr. Compartz, the base assassin.

CHAPTER XIV.

A PRECIOUS PAIR.

In a small room on the first floor of the "Goat and Trumpet," sat an ill-looking navvie. He had been waiting some time for the arrival of a friend and companion. The time he thus spent had not been wasted in idleness. He had arrived soon after ten; it was scarcely now eleven, yet two pewter pots drained to the bottom, a bottle of gin half empty, and a smoking glass of grog, stood on the table before him, still in good truth the fellow could scarcely be said to be intoxicated. He was warmed (as he called it) and that was all. He came to keep an appointment; he had important business to trans-

act, and he delayed the intended pleasure of getting thoroughly drunk till he should have carried out the mission on which he had been despatched.

"Well, I'm blowed if I likes waiting, my thoughts haint over-pleasant; I almost feels, when I am all alone, as if my thumb and fingers was still pressing the flunkey's throat. And this here last little affair. It hain't cosey, is it? Here I'm a-done out of all the swag, and am in hourly fear of being nabbed and sent across the herring-pond. I shan't stay here arter twelve. The old man must be in his bunk afore this. I suspects old Sal can't or wont come; if she don't, I'm blessed if I don't go up and unkennel her. I'm very thirsty." And he raised his glass to his lips, and at one draught swallowed the whole of its contents.

While he was enjoying himself a female slipped quietly in. She undid her cloak,

took off her hood, and as Marks (for it was indeed he) put down the emptied measure on the table, he saw before him the hard features of his wife.

"Why, Sal, what has kept you so long, and be d—d to you? I've been waiting here these two hours."

"That's a lie, Jem," replied his affectionate wife, "for Maister George only arrived at nine. You had to see him, you had to come 'ere, and it ain't eleven yet. Well, Jem, you seems to 'ave forgotten your manners."

"How so?"

"You han't so much as said—Sal, take a drain."

"What will you have? I'm ready to stand whatsomdever you likes best; so tinkle the rattler, and choose what you likes. This here Old Tom aint so snuffy."

"Well, I'll try it, Jem; for I doesn't

want nobody to see me without my Thompson toggs. Mix us a drop, will ye—hot, sweet, and strong?"

"There it is, Mother Marks," said the husband, handing her a smoking glass of strong grog, "and while you dips your beak into it I'll tell you all as passed."

"I looks at ye, Jem," replied the wife, and began drinking her liquor.

"Well, I got to Arf-moon-street as quick as I could; I arrived just in time to meet our pal. 'What the 'ell do you do 'ere!' says he."

"That's a crammer; my Georgy never swears."

"If you calls him your Georgy again, I'll punch your nob."

Mrs. Marks felt pleased at the jealousy Jem evinced, and gently said—

"Go on, Jem. You knows I loves yer."

Jem grinned at the assurance, and continued—

"My dear Sal, you doesn't think as George ever swears. Before you I don't suppose as he does; but when two gen'lemen like he and I is together, you see we hain't partiklar."

"Perhaps so, Jem; you is always right. But as I said afore, go on."

"'Well,' says I, 'the missus couldn't get away till the hearl was a bed.' So says she to me, 'Go to George, and ax him what he wants.' 'Well, Jem,' says he, shaking my daddle, 'run along and ax your wife if she's a given a sartain person any of the wine I gived to her.' Says I, 'She's guv him three doses.' 'And ow is he?' says George. 'He's baddish,' says I, 'and the doctor can't understand it,' and then I guv a reg'lar knowing laugh. After a while says he again, "Jemmy, my boy, can I trust

you?' 'In coorse,' says I. 'Well, then,' says he, 'take this little packet to the old woman——'"

"Old woman?" interrupted Mrs. Marks. "Are you sure as he said old woman?—a brute!"

"Well, that don't sinify much. 'Take this here parcel, and give it to your wife,' says he, 'and tell her to give this and finish the job.' 'Hulloa,' says I, 'that 'ere wont do, that's a scragging matter.' 'Well, ain't you got your own 'ead in the 'alter? you needn't be so cussed partiklar about your old partner.'"

"Jem, don't be so owdacious; hand us the bottle."

"'Well,' says I—for you sees I never loses sight of the main chance—'and if my Sal does, and you becomes a nobby lord, what do you mean to do for us?' 'I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll set you and the old girl up in a public-'ouse, and

stock it. And what's more,' says he, 'I'll give you fifty pounds a year fortin', and then you can live as a real gen'leman, and I'll introduce you to the first of company.' "

"Well, that 'ere's tempting. Tip us the packet."

"'Ere it is; but mind as you don't meddle with it or smell it, or I'm beggared if it wont stop your breathing. It's a werry dreadful pison, so take care 'ow you 'andles it."

Mrs. Marks took the very small paper package which Jem handed to her, and placed it in a sort of reticule she always carried. Such an appendage was old-fashioned, and many would have scorned it; but Sarah had found it profitable on more than one occasion, when loose trinkets and plate had been carelessly left about. Like a soldier's haversack, it was

most convenient when on a foraging expedition.

"He shall 'ave it to-morrow. I say, Jem, wont it be jolly when you and I is gen'lefolks? Pass the bottle; how slow you is to-night!"

"Well, I thinks it's almost time for you to go back, ain't it?"

"I shan't go no more 'ome to-night. I told the doctor arter my lord had agone to bed, says I, 'I wants to go and see my nevvy, who is the hunder-cook at the Palace, and I shan't come back till late.' 'Oh!' says he, 'you'd a better stay hout if you are a-going to be so late; that is to say, if you 'appen to 'ave any place to sleep in.' 'Oh!' says I, 'I can sleep at the Palace; there's allays a spare bed for me there.' And so he makes a low bow, and here I am. But tell me, Jem, do you really loves me as you says?"

"Don't I!" replied her husband.

"Well, then, take me to Creemorne; I wants something cheerful. This 'ere job will be a melancholic sort of affair; I shall 'ear nothing but owls for a week."

"I hain't no stumpy."

"Don't tarry-diddle; don't you be hartful; I knows as George tipped you."

"Well, he only gived me a cooter."

"I'll put another to it, and we'll 'ave a reg'lar spree."

"I say, Sal, I s'pose there hain't no harm in borrowing a ticker there? I left mine at home, and it's werry distressing not to know the hower." And they joined in a hearty laugh. "But afore I goes, I've summut of consequence to tell you," said Mr. Marks.

"Well, then, make 'aste; I'm in a 'urry to be horf."

"Do you know, I suspects the writing

chap as my lord 'as 'ired is our boy John?"

"We never 'ad no boy. You're drunk, Sal."

"I only wish I was. No, indeed I ain't, though I'm blessed if I wont be afore I sleeps. But you is worse than drunk—you're as stupid as a hass. John was the boy as I ought to have—you know what?"

"Oh, I twigs!—'im as we sold to the Lord Mayor, or some such a nob?"

"Just so. Well, first of all I finds out as he was called Marks, afore he was changed to Leslie. So on this I watches. Now, do you recollect the scar as you made on 'is left harm with your pocket-knife when you was in a passion?"

"I does; but what of that?"

"Well, I watched this young chap, and I'm blessed if he hadn't got this 'ere hidentical scar; and then he's as like 'is

mother as two peas. So there hain't no doubt."

"You didn't say nothink?"

"In coorse not."

"And what do you mean to do?"

"Settle the hearl; and when George is made a lord, threaten 'im with bringing forrard this here hair to the title, unless he pays us uncommon well. We hought to 'ave 'arf the hestates at least."

"You're a hangel!—you 'as a 'ed!" screamed the delighted Marks, rushing towards her and folding her in his bear-like embrace.

"Leave orf this, and let's be a toddling," replied his wife.

"I'll pay the bill 'ere," said Jem, "and you'll pay in the gardens. You've got your thingumbob, haven't you? It may be useful."

"Here it is," cried the woman, holding up her reticule.

"Come on, then;" and away they started for Cremorne.

To those who have never been at this popular place of amusement, the first glance of the gay scene is perfectly entrancing. The myriads of coloured lamps, casting a peculiar yet strong light over the gardens; the well-kept walks, the lovely flowers, the brilliantly-illuminated temples, each dedicated to some delightful exhibition; the splendid conservatories, the unrivalled ballets, and, above all, the well-lit platform, with its thousand mirrors and its magic orchestra, may well recal to the cultured mind the early impressions made on that mind by the glowing pages of the "Arabian Nights." Neither Marks nor his wife had ever heard of these tales, so they only expressed their satisfaction by an occasional ejaculation of "*Oh my!*" as some new wonder met their view.

Jem was enjoying the scene—a gold watch and chain had already found their way into the female's reticule—when suddenly the good-looking proprietor came up to him, and pointing out Marks to a detective in plain clothes who accompanied him, quietly said—

"That is the man; I saw him take it."

The functionary stepped forward and gave a low whistle. In another moment a policeman in uniform seemed to spring from the ground.

"So we've got you at last, have we?" said the first official. "Why, sir," added he, turning to the proprietor, "this is a bird that we've been seeking to cage for above two months. I say," addressing Marks, "you were not in the burglary at Hornsey, were you?"

"You ain't no beak; I'm not bound to answer a mere bobby," replied the captive.

"Come along, my tulip; and mind, if you attempt any nonsense we'll put on the bracelets."

"I'm as quiet as a lamb, Mr. Robert," replied the hardened offender.

Mrs. Marks had cleverly slipped away during this colloquy, and after taking two or three turns in the Garden to elude capture, in case the gates were watched, slipped out, and having slept for a few hours in a neighbouring tavern, returned to Grantchester House as soon as she calculated that the housemaids had left their beds.

Did she mourn the untoward recognition which would probably remove her dear husband during the remaining term of her natural life? Far from it; he had long been a drain upon her purse—a dangerous repository of her most perilous secrets.

CHAPTER XV.

THE REVIEW.

NOTHING could exceed the loveliness of the morning as Lord Urmstone and his fair daughter, attended by Leslie and a cousin of her ladyship's, a commodore in the navy, lately returned from India, started in the carriage for Hyde Park, their object being to witness the inspection of our finest regiment of Volunteers —a corps consisting almost entirely of lawyers. Perfect in their drill, assiduous in their attendance, and connected by ties of relationship with many of the first families in London, his Satanic Majesty's own Volunteers (as they are popularly

called) are decidedly the most. popular body of men in the British metropolis.

Arrived on the ground, Leslie, who was in uniform, though no longer in the army, left the equipage to speak to a friend he beheld at a distance, and allowed the rest of the party to go on and select their places. From half-a-dozen chosen spots they were driven away by the soldiers who kept the ground, in spite of the loud remonstrances of the naval veteran and the declaration of his rank by Lord Urmstone, and at length became so annoyed by being thrust away from the chance of any good view, that they had serious thoughts of returning to Berkeley-square, when our hero came up to them, and being made acquainted with the subject of their anger, instantly jumped into the carriage, and desired the coachman to take up one of the best posts near the saluting-flag. The instant this

movement was perceived by the men on duty they rushed to the heads of the horses and would have stopped them, but Leslie, putting his head out, desired them to desist. His mere uniform, his subordinate rank, would have scarcely warranted this; but when they saw his Victoria Cross dangling in front of a heart that knew no fear, they at once fell back and saluted the brave young man who at the peril of his life had so gloriously earned it.

For the first time Emily publicly learnt the value of that copper decoration which commands the respect and admiration of the whole of the English army. The Bath may be conferred for long service—it may, perhaps, be obtained by family influence—the Guelphic order has been almost thrown at the heads of generals who have seen no service—it has been conferred as compensation for slow pro-

motion; but the Victoria Cross, the proud object of every brave soldier's ambition, like the Legion of Honour in France, knows no distinction in rank; it is equally open to be won by the private as by his general. No Court favour, no Horse Guards' influence can obtain it; the most exalted heroism can alone earn it; the most daring deeds of valour alone can account for its possession. No wonder, then, that a Victoria Cross commands the homage of every brother soldier.

Far more proud of the honours paid him than any that could be accorded to herself, or even the exalted rank of her father, she proposed to leave the carriage under the escort of her intended husband. Lord Urmstone was too feeble to accompany them; the commodore volunteered to do so. His accession to the party, though not solicited, was thoroughly welcome, and away they started. Leslie,

with his lovely companion, quickly passed the first line, and the naval officer was following him, when a lynx-eyed sentinel stopped him. Leslie had to go back to pass him through, which was easily done, not altogether to the satisfaction of the old fellow, who grumbled in an undertone—

"Well, may I be broke if I understand these new-fangled ways! Times are sadly changed since the days when England ruled the seas. A commodore in the navy now is turned back and offended, unless he is protected by a youngster with a copper cross on his breast. But hang me if I ought to grumble; bravery should be respected in whatever service it is displayed."

Leslie now stopped to speak to his friend General Smite, whose gaze of admiration, as he beheld Lady Emily, was not to be mistaken. Our hero proudly introduced her as his intended

bride, and a flattering speech was thus drawn from the lips of the handsomest man, and certainly one of the best officers in her Majesty's cavalry service.

"I can now well account, my friend," said the gallant officer, "for your quitting the army"—looking with a smile towards Emily. "If you will allow me, I will place you where you can see the troops march past."

The offer was accepted, and Lady Emily soon found herself "the observed of all observers," standing as she did in the very midst of the élite of the British army. Of this well-looking group Emily instantly became the cynosure.

"Tell me," asked Emily, "who is the handsome-looking person who has just left me?"

"He is a general officer, equally celebrated for his distinguished services and the very high status of his family. His

tall and fine figure, when he commanded one of our most distinguished Lancer regiments, has been the admiring theme of many a female tongue. His breast is covered with orders, yet it would be difficult to find out that he had ever been in action, were it left to himself to proclaim his own deeds."

"And who is that elderly gentleman yonder?"

"Oh, that is Lord Boromere—the oldest man in the British army. He is a field-marshal, and if there had been any higher honours, probably he would have obtained them for his long and efficient services. He won his title with his own good right arm, which, although he looks just now very well, can scarcely be very powerful, since I believe he is at least ninety-two or ninety-three years old. The officer now speaking to him is Lord Madigan, the pet of the Horse Guards,

the victim of the public. Whether he be the best or most ill-treated man in the world it is impossible to say—whether a good officer, a kind and munificent friend, or a bully and shirker, it is difficult to discover, since opinion appears pretty equally divided. But stay, here comes the Duke and his popular aide-de-camp. See, the gallant colonel gallops to the front to receive him. The review is about to commence."

The usual forms took place. The Volunteers, called to attention, opened their ranks, and performed a general salute, while the band played the National Anthem. The Inspector and staff, attended by other mounted officers, passed down the ranks, while the astute lawyers stood as firmly and as stiffly as statues. "Bravo! three cheers for Old Nick's Own!" cried an urchin in the crowd. "What will they do next, I wonder?"

asked a country girl of her London beau. "They will probably charge—lawyers do nothing without that!" and the witling laughed at his own sally.

The Commander-in-Chief, highly satisfied with the appearance of the corps, galloped back to the saluting-point. The Volunteers closed their ranks, broke into open column, and marched past in slow and quick time with a smartness and precision which would have done honour to any regiment of the line.

Several evolutions were now gone through. But Lady Emily, feeling alarmed lest her father might be weary, returned to the carriage, and, highly gratified by what they had seen, they drove back to Thomas's, where an early dinner awaited them, Lord Urmstone having secured a large private box at Her Majesty's Theatre.

"Theatricals are now in the ascendant,"

observed the commodore, as the subject of their proposed evening's entertainment was broached—"theatricals never were so flourishing, although I must confess I don't approve of the present system of running pieces two or three hundred nights. It may be profitable to the managers, but may I be shipwrecked if I like it at all! Were I to buy a season-ticket now, it would be to see some one harrowing drama, or some one grand scenic play, performed a hundred times consecutively. I call it a regular *do*."

"Commodore, you speak as if you were a sufferer," said Lord Urmstone.

"Then you truly read my feelings," replied the naval officer. "I'm a renter at Drury Lane, and have purchased a season-ticket on two occasions."

"From what you say, I presume the entertainments you speak of are of a second-rate order."

"On the contrary, they are so deucedly good, the theatres are now nightly crowded."

"There must be some merit in them, then," chimed in Leslie.

"Oh, as to that, the performances I speak of are full of merit, and, as I said before, prove most attractive; while some pieces of less pretension than 'Colleen Bawn,' 'Peep o' Day,' and the 'Ticket-of-Leave Man,' have been so wonderfully forced down the throats of the public by the extraordinary talents of such stars as Miss Bateman and Mr. Sothern, that the theatres have been crammed to the ceiling."

"Upon my word, commodore," observed Lady Emily, "I should suppose you had been a dramatic author yourself, you speak so warmly on the subject."

"Beauteous cousin! you have guessed

it. In early life I tried my hand as a dramatist."

"And failed?"

"Not so. I wrote a tragedy, and was lucky enough to get it accepted and performed at one of our (then) patent theatres. The house was crowded, and my friends mustered in great force. The fourth act had ended, like all the preceding ones, with great éclat; many of my acquaintances met me in the lobby, shook hands with me, and congratulated me on my success. The stage manager came round while the act-drop was down to ask me some question; from his smiling manner, his particular civility, I saw that I was looked upon as a triumphant author by the authorities behind the curtain."

"Go on, go on!" urged Lady Emily.

"Well, I will, though I fear I am somewhat prolix. The fifth act came on;

the grand feature of the tragedy arrived; the house was silently attentive; my head was averted from the scene only for a moment; my heart was beating, for I should soon be called upon to come forward for the first time and bow my thanks, when suddenly an unnatural cry struck my attentive ear, followed by a general burst of laughter. A cachinnatory sound at such a moment was indeed misplaced, for my heroine was in the act of dying. I looked up; astonished and angered, I cast an eagle's glance towards the actors. In a moment I read the dreadful truth. An enormous cat—to me it seemed as large and as fierce as a tiger—stood exactly in the front of the stage; her jaws were wide open, her thick tail stood erect; firmly she kept her position, mewing loudly and continuously. The hero king, who should have been supporting the unfortunate queen, stepped

forward and kicked the feline intruder; but the brute, instead of budging, only roared the louder. Some of the audience began (meaning it kindly) to hiss the cat off the stage; the laughter became louder and louder, and noises of every description began to mingle with the fun. Her majesty, finding herself deserted, marched in great dudgeon off the stage; a servant came with a large broom and drove grimalkin from her position. The stage-manager came forward to explain, but the gods were uproarious and wouldn't hear him. The curtain fell, the piece was damned—for never, never again did I allow it to be tried. I have not since put pen to paper as a dramatist. The British public have probably lost a second Shakespeare, and all through a cat!"

The party laughed heartily at the com-

modore's anecdote, and as soon as the carriage was announced started for the Opera House.

On their arrival they found the curtain still down, and thus had an opportunity of glancing around the house.

A fashionable and brilliant group occupied Her Majesty's box. Alas! she whose presence could alone have attracted the aristocracy of England to her side was absent, mourning in deep solitude the bereavement which has deprived this country of the cheering aspect of a beloved monarch, and that monarch of a wise and prudent counsellor.

Italian opera had given place to English versions, and thus a good excuse was afforded to the higher ranks for temporarily abandoning their usually favourite place of resort.

Lord Urmstone knew very few of the present audience, and learnt from the

commodore the names of many he had never seen before.

"Who are those I see yonder?" asked the peer.

"They are a party of literary and theatrical celebrities. He on the right, talking to our most celebrated popular novelist, is John Dannford, the theatrical critic, attached to the most powerful journal of the day. His veto can make or mar the future prospects of the young dramatist. Luckily, this power has fallen to the hands of one who, lenient and kind hearted, has withheld that biting criticism which would in early days have crushed many who now rank as our most popular dramatists. He has never been known to be unkind or unjust. Behind him, the tall, good-looking man is one of our largest publishers; one who boasts the rare virtue of bringing out works for their merit, and not for the mere rank

or fame of their authors. The lady beside him is Madame de l'Ange, the most classical, the most graceful actress that ever trod the stage—and——but stay, the overture begins. This was well played, was rapturously applauded, and the curtain rose. To speak of the manner in which the opera was performed, would be to speak most approvingly. The singing was really very good; but the piece itself ('Faust') was so extremely improper (not to make use of a stronger term), that Lord Urmstone withdrew his daughter long before it was finished, regretting that an establishment bearing Her Majesty's name, and frequented by the pure and lovely daughters of our aristocracy, should be desecrated by the representation of such pieces as 'Faust,' 'Lucrezia Borgia,' and the 'Traviata.'"

"But of course," as the commodore observed to his noble relative, when he

mentioned the subject to him, "the approval or disapproval of such entertainments is entirely a matter of taste. There are, I fear, some people who prefer music to morals."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CURTAIN RAISED.

THE Earl reclined in an easy-chair propped up by cushions. He seemed extremely weak, and his hand trembled. The pallor of his cheek and his sunken eye would have plainly indicated to the uninitiated that the worthy peer was already a prey to that most distressing, that most fatal disease—consumption. But such was not the case; the two talented medical men denied the existence of the dreadful malady. His lungs were in the most healthy state; he seldom expectorated; indeed, many of the most prominent indications of this fearful disorder were wanting. The attack seemed rather to be atrophy; yet here, again, the leading

features did not appear. The doctors were sorely puzzled. That Lord Grantchester was ill—seriously ill—was certain; that each day he became worse and worse, was evident; but of the exact nature of his illness the sons of Æsculapius were wholly ignorant. For once in their lives they confessed themselves at fault, and called in further advice, but without eliciting any fresh information.

It was now ten o'clock, and Lady Grantchester retired to her room. Mrs. Thompson, who had undertaken the office of nurse to his lordship, sat nodding in her chair; Leslie was looking over some accounts sent up by his lordship's tenants at Grantchester.

The Earl suddenly awoke from an uneasy slumber, called Leslie to him, and desired him to write to Mr. Scarsdale, and request that gentleman to call on him on the following day in order to draw up his will.

Our hero instantly crossed the room, and sat down at a writing-desk, which had been brought in by the peer's desire, and, as there was no other place for it, it had been placed against a large mirror—an arrangement Leslie scarcely approved, as it seemed like vanity, since every time he raised his head he saw himself in the looking-glass.

"Make his will!" muttered Mrs. Thompson to herself, "that will never do. I must no longer delay, or I lose my reward," and fumbling in her pocket she pulled out a small paper carefully folded up, then going to the table she took up a glass, and emptying a bottle of medicine prescribed by the doctors into it, she next, with a Satanic smile, mingled with it a white powder, which the packet had contained.

Nothing now could frustrate her designs. Lord Grantchester was lying

back in a doze, his eyelids closed; the secretary was busy writing, intent on his task, his back turned towards the nurse. None, then, could have seen her. In safety she might administer the draught, and, if any suspicion should hereafter arise, she could throw that suspicion on the secretary, who, as a spoiled dependent, might readily be supposed to feel an interest in the death of his patron.

As stealthily as a cat, after taking a careful survey around, did Mrs. Thompson approach the peer, and gently touching him, exclaim in her softest tone—

"My lord, it is time to take your draught," and handed to him the glass she had prepared.

The old nobleman was in the act of raising it to his lips, when suddenly the vessel was dashed from his hand, and at the same moment the wretched hag found herself grasped by the throat. She would

have freed herself, but she was in the iron clutch of Marks Leslie.

"My lord, my good lord, pardon me if I err; but I fear not," and turning to Mrs. Thompson, and, at the same time, using his disengaged hand violently to ring the bell, he loudly exclaimed, "If I accuse you wrongfully, may Heaven forgive me!"

Lord Grantchester, who had not risen from his seat unassisted for three days, suddenly started up; Lady Grantchester and several servants rushed in; a young surgeon who had slept in the house ever since the peer's illness, also hurried to the room, and there beheld, to their undisguised astonishment, the Earl standing upright, looking like a resuscitated corpse, and the ordinarily mild secretary holding in his tight grasp the suspected Mrs. Thompson.

Leslie saw their astonishment, and at once cried—

"I accuse this wretch of an attempt to poison her master the Earl."

"Oh, gracious me! that there poor young man's gone mad. He has by some haccident seen me give my lord the medicine, what was made up according to the proscription of his doctors, and all of a moment he's gone crazy, and thinks I was a-going to murder the dear Hearl, Lord bless him! But I pardons him, as it was all out of love for our master."

"Not so; I saw you mingle some powder which you took from your pocket with the draught."

"Well, that 'ere is a good 'un. Why, you was setting with your back turned to me a-writing; so how could you see?"

"That's true," lowly murmured Lord Grantchester; "I saw him so placed and so employed. Do you not mistake, my dear boy?"

"No, my lord; although I confess your lordship is right in asserting that my back was turned."

"Then how could you have seen her?"

"Look at the desk, and you will be convinced. It stands before a large mirror. Reflecting for a moment on the subject of my letter, I happened to look into that glass. I saw the cautious motions of the nurse. This aroused my curiosity. I watched her, and saw her first mingle the potion and then offer it to your lordship. You know the rest."

"Lor', what a crammer! I only gave him what them doctors ordered him."

"Oh, that's seen in a moment," chimed in the surgeon; and, taking up the broken wine-glass, he approached the light, and closely examining some sediment at the bottom of it, tried some chemical test; he

gravely turned round and uttered in a loud voice—

"In this glass lurks the most subtle—the most deadly of poisons!" He beckoned to a servant and ordered him instantly to go and bring in the police.

Mrs. Thompson now began to cry, and, after vainly endeavouring to obtain mercy at their hands, she began to throw out hints respecting Leslie. These falsehoods were at once discovered and denied.

In a few moments the police were announced.

"Oh, do not let them in," screamed the now alarmed culprit, "do not let them in; they will swear to anything. I shall probably be hanged."

"Very likely," observed the surgeon.

"And as innocent as a sucking babby."

"Enough of this," said the Earl; "call the officers in."

"No, no; not so. I will confess all. It was a mistake."

"Do you hear my orders?" asked the Earl of his retainers.

"Stay, stay; you will bitterly repent this. Clear the room, and I will make a confession as will make you the 'appiest of the 'appy. Promise to let me go, and I'll warrant as you shall never repent it."

"Not so," said the Earl; "you will repeat publicly all you have to say, or the law must take its course."

"Well, then, listen. My lady, do you recollect 'aving a babby considerably above twenty years ago, as you swore was alive when it was born?"

"Oh, torture me not," exclaimed Lady Grantchester, "of course I do."

"Well, you warn't far wrong—*it was alive!*"

Both Lord and Lady Grantchester were

so overcome that the nurse had to pause for some minutes in her revelations.

"And what's more, that 'ere babby's alive now!"

Lady Grantchester dropped into a chair, but urged the woman to go on.

"I didn't murder it, as I was ordered; no—no! I kept him snug, and though he don't know me again, he's in this room!"

To describe the agitation which now arose is beyond the power of words.

At length the Earl was enabled to speak—"Where is he? As there's a Heaven above, your life depends on your answer."

"Well, it's rummy to me as you didn't find it out afore. There he stands!" and she pointed to Leslie, who stood wonder-struck.

"I had always a presentiment," and he rushed up to Leslie, and warmly em-

braced him; but suddenly starting back, he sharply demanded—

"And how can you prove this?"

"Do you recollect the name of my lady's monthly nurse?"

"I think it was Marks."

"And ain't that chap called Marks too?"

"True, such was his name ere he assumed that of Leslie; but that is a mere coincidence; how can you prove that our child is not dead?"

"'Cause I saved it, and brought it up."

"You?"

"Oh no!" cried Lady Grantchester, "you do not in the least resemble the nurse that attended me."

"Would you know her again?" asked Mrs. Thompson.

"I would, amidst a thousand," replied the lady.

"Then here I be!" screamed the nurse, throwing off her wig and spectacles, wiping her face, and assuming, as it were, an altered form—"here I be; do you know me now?"

Mrs. Marks stood undisguised before them!

Lady Grantchester screamed, and would have fallen back fainting, but she was caught in the arms of him who, from henceforth, we must recognise as her loved son.

"If that ain't enough, why you may ax Lord Urmstone or some sich name who took him from me," added the woman.

"And what thus tempted you to try to poison me?"

"A bribe, as you calls it."

"And who offered it?"

"That ain't no part of our bargain; I've sworn not to tell and I wont; all I

says is, take care, you've gotten a precious sharp enemy."

"And will nothing tempt you to reveal his name?"

"Why should I? Perhaps I may get out of some other scrape hereafter by telling that. You promised faithfully as you would let me go if I told you my secret; now see as I does so safely."

"Even to a murderess I will not break my plighted word. James (added the peer, turning to a servant) send away the police-officer, and then convey this woman in safety to any part of London she chooses; leave her there, and return at once."

The man bowed and left the room.

"I will lose no time in establishing my son's identity; and this I can easily do. Now, however, let all except my immediate family leave the room. My wife, myself, and my long-lost but

now recovered son will return thanks on our bended knees to that beneficent Creator who removes the sorrows of those he has afflicted and blesses the declining days of those who trust in him."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE POLICE MAGISTRATE.

At an early hour on the following morning Mrs. Thompson, alias Rearden, alias Marks, came to Grantchester House, and solicited an immediate interview with the Earl. The appearance of the old woman, now denuded of her disguise, astonished all the servants, as she had expressed her strong determination to vanish from their sight for ever. She was now, however, so clamorous in her application, that her request was conveyed to Lord Grantchester, and by his desire she was shown into the breakfast-room, where the family were already assembled.

"Well, woman, what do you want with

me? After what has passed—after the way in which you have foully wronged me, I am astonished at seeing you thus voluntarily seek my presence."

"Oh, my lord, I really does think as your lordship ought to do me a turn, letting bygones be bygones, considering as I restored to you your son and heir as sits there, and a fine young feller he is, and that's my opinion."

"Well, speak out. Once more, what do you want?"

"My Jem is in trouble, and he is to be brought afore the beak for the last time to-day; now, if your lordship would only put in a good word, or even his young lordship, as Jem, as it were, brought up (Leslie, or, as we must now call him, Lord Sydney, winced), it would do him a deal of good."

"But I don't know the fellow, and I could not speak in his favour."

"Well, don't speak, but only come into court; and I feels that the beak will be so pleased with the honner of your company as to make him let Jem off."

After a short pause, the Earl replied—

"I will comply with your request on one condition."

"Shall I go for you, my dear father? you are still weak," asked his new-found son.

"No, I must go; Lady Grantchester and yourself will both accompany me, as well as this woman."

"What! to a police court?" demanded the lady.

"Listen," replied the Earl; then turning to Mrs. Marks, he addressed her—"Well, will you go?"

"You haven't yet told me what the condition is?"

"That you accompany me into London, and at once go before a magistrate and

make an affidavit confirming the truth of your statement to myself and Lady Grantchester. We believe you: certain corroborating circumstances convince us that yonder gentleman is our son; but we must take your evidence on oath, in order to give weight to the legal proceedings which must be gone through to establish the real birth of Lord Sydney."

"Well, I hain't much objection; if you thinks I'm obligated to do this, I'll do it."

"My good woman, it is to your interest, for on the completion of the forms to which I allude, I will give you one hundred pounds, provided you will undertake to leave this country."

"Wont I? that's all!"

"Sydney," added Lord Grantchester, "ring the bell, and order the carriage and a brougham."

Leslie started up—it was the first time he had been called by his new title—he

did as he was desired, and gave the necessary orders.

Lord and Lady Grantchester, with their son, proceeded in the carriage; Mrs. Marks followed in the brougham.

Arrived at the police office, the Earl was received by the magistrate in his private room. He was an old friend of his lordship, and greeted him most cordially, expressing surprise, however, at seeing him thus, with his friends, within the precincts of the court.

Lord Grantchester explained his errand. As his narrative disclosed the wonderful recovery of a son long supposed to be dead, Mr. Maxwell became lost in astonishment; no case had ever come before him so strange, and, puzzled what to do, he acted as metropolitan police magistrates often do—he left the room to consult for a few moments with his clerk.

On his return, he asked the nobleman the name of his solicitor?

"Mr. Henry Scarsdale."

"A very clever fellow—a safe lawyer; you could not be in better hands."

"But why ask the question?"

"Because your legal adviser had better draw up the evidence of this woman—who, by-the-by, is better away, as I believe her husband is to be brought before me this morning—so I should suggest that it would be as well if she went down to Mr. Scarsdale's office—one of my officers can accompany her—he could then draw up the necessary deed and return with it here, when I'll at once take this woman's affidavit. I've no doubt the whole transaction will not take more than an hour."

"I will do as you like; I have fortunately a brougham at the door."

"Well, then, give your instructions to

this officer;" and he rang for a policeman, who entered.

Lord Grantchester wrote a hurried line to his friend, and despatched it by the man, who now quitted the room with the old woman.

"If you will wait here," said the functionary, "I will send you a newspaper to amuse you; you cannot expect the appearance of your lawyer for some time. I regret I cannot stay with you; I trust her ladyship will excuse me, but my time is up, I am due in court."

"Am I asking too great a favour? but really, if Lord Grantchester has no objection, I would ask your permission to enter your court," said Lady Grantchester, "it must be a curious scene."

"Sometimes. I cannot positively promise you any amusement; but if you will honour me with your presence, you can have places on the bench."

"Oh! by all means; my wife's suggestion is an excellent one; come along."

And in the next minute they were both seated beside the magistrate, listening to the cases which came before him.

A gentleman, found "drunk and incapable" in one of our most fashionable streets, was lectured and fined five shillings. A poor man discovered in a state of intoxication, which was proved to be the result of a glass of spirits given him by a friend, was frowned at and discharged; for, in good truth, Mr. Maxwell took no delight in favouring the rich or in oppressing the poor.

The next prisoner brought forward was a regular Jack Tar, who stroked down his hair, and making a sailor's shuffling bow, hoped "his honour was quite well."

"And what are you brought up for?"

asked the magistrate, refraining from laughter with some difficulty.

"Please your honour, I don't know; but that respectable gentleman in blue, with the glazed hat on, knows all about it."

"This here man," said Z 1104, "is accused by a young woman of deserting her and disowning her, your worship."

"And what claim has she on him?" asked the functionary.

"She says he is her lawful husband. He married her yesterday, and the parish officers are most anxious to hestablish it, your worship, because she threatens to come upon them."

The sailor, who had been twisting his straw hat round and round, and appeared completely astonished by the accusation, here audibly uttered "Well, if that ain't a good 'un, shiver my timbers!"

"What do you say to this, my good

man?" asked the magistrate of the prisoner.

"Well, your honour, I knows little about it. Last night, just as I come up from Woolwich to spend a trifle I got for a little affair we had in the West Hinges, I meets the lady, as the gentleman in blue talks about, and says she to me, quite genteelly, 'Jack, will you give us a glass of gin?' 'Well,' says I, 'I don't care.' So she takes me into a gentleman's house called the 'Pig and Potato,' and I'm blowed if she didn't drink more grog than our captain's steward and the black cook put together. 'Well, then,' says she, 'we'll take a walk;' and I was so fuddled as I'd a done anything she asked. 'Come,' says she, 'and see my uncle, a most first-rate gentleman, as keeps a shop in Wapping.' So away we goes; and then says she, 'Jack, would you like to marry me?' 'Well, I don't care,' says I, 'but I must be aboard our ship

early in the morning, or our skipper'll be after stopping my allowance.' 'And how much money have you?' says she. 'Twenty-three pounds and a silver watch,' says I. 'Oh, give me the watch,' says she, 'I want to lend it my uncle;' and with that I gave it her, and she went into the shop her uncle kept, and when she came out she said, says she, 'He's gone to dine with the Lord Mayor, so I have left it with his son, as is an officer in the army.'"

"Yes, but about this marriage?"

"Well, I don't know much about it; but she took me to the Blackymoor's Head, and made me jolly drunk. I fell asleep, your honour, and may I be rolled in the lee scupper if I found more than two pound in my pocket!"

"But are you married?"

"Well, I leave it all to you, captain; if you says I am, I suppose I am; if not,

I'll go back again as an A.B. to the old Arethusa."

"Where's the prosecutrix?" asked Mr. Maxwell.

"Yes—yes," chimed in the tar, "tell her to come for'ard and show her figure-head."

"She has not appeared as she promised."

"Then I at once dismiss this case. I am astonished how you could bring such a case before me. How could the woman be married during the night? That this poor fellow has been robbed there is no doubt, and she evidently fears it may be so proved. You ought to have brought her before me for the theft, not this simple man. Prisoner, you are discharged; you can return to your ship as soon as you like."

"Thank ye, captain; I knew you'd know better than me;" and as he stepped

from the dock he muttered, "These skippers are rare judges, after all;" when again jumping back, he made a low bow, and said, "I beg pardon, captain, but if I understands you right, I'm not spliced, am I?"

"You may, as I said before, go on board a happier and, I think, a wiser bachelor than when you left your ship."

Jack left the court dancing a naval hornpipe, scattering the few shillings he had left amongst the spectators.

The next case that came on was that of Marks. The evidence was clear, and brought the robbery home to him in a most distinct manner. Jem, like most rascals, was an arrant coward; he whimpered, and almost wept in the dock.

He was fully committed for trial.

His examination was scarcely over when a messenger came in to say that the lawyer awaited them. They retired

to the private room, where Scarsdale and Mrs. Marks awaited them. Her affidavit was taken and the business was concluded. Mr. Maxwell turned to her:—"I have been compelled, my good woman, to commit your husband for trial."

"Well, I feared so."

"Would you like to see him?"

"Thank your worship, I'd rayther not—I don't like sociating with dis'onest people. My lord, if you don't want me no more I'll be orf, for I'd rayther not see Jem. Good-bye, ladies and gen'lemen," added she; and with a low curtsey she left the room.

Lord Grantchester, with his wife and son, returned home, much amused with what they had seen and heard.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DEAD ALIVE.

An individual wrapped in a large cloak, and so concealed by what is called a muffler that neither his face nor form could be recognised, had walked once or twice up and down Halfmoon-street, when he suddenly perceived a paper in the window of a house on the opposite side. He crossed over and read—"A room on the second floor to be let." He without hesitation knocked at the door and inquired relative to the apartment so advertised. The landlady told him that it was merely a bed-room—but certainly a most excellent one; that she had nothing else to spare, as she lived in the

parlours herself, and her first floor was occupied by the Honourable George Sydney, the brother of an earl; Lord William Branson had only just left her, and that her house was solely frequented by persons of the highest distinction. The stranger, without inquiring the terms, or making any further inspection, at once took the room, giving as a reference the card of Mr. Scarsdale, who was fortunately known to her. The new tenant made but one proviso, namely, that he should instantly occupy the apartment; and, in order to secure that favour, he paid a week's rent in advance to the now obsequious landlady.

He went away, and in less than half an hour returned in a cab, bringing with him a small portmanteau. His room was ready, and he at once took possession of it.

Left to himself, he undid his luggage,

and took from thence a pistol and a life-preserver; he next rendered his already pallid face still more ghastly by the application of some strange cosmetic; and having ascertained that no one was stirring, he stole down to the first floor, and after making sure that it was empty, he stealthily entered the drawing-room. Here a paraffin lamp burned, apparently awaiting the return of the aristocratic lodger. Some other objects indicated that he had not yet come in. The stranger carefully looked around the room. There was a closet beside the fire-place, and in it the intruder ensconced himself just as the outer door was heard to open and shut, and then the steps of some one coming upstairs were audible.

The proposed robber, murderer, or practical joker, whichever he might be, closely drew the door to, and with a palpitating heart listened to the very breathings of the new arrival.

George Sydney (for it was indeed he) threw himself into a chair and gave vent to certain ejaculations which at once announced disappointment and annoyance.

He partook of some light refreshment and then sat down to write. He was soon so deeply engaged in his task, that he did not hear the stranger slip out of the cupboard and approach him. He looked over the writer's shoulder, and found that he was looking over, correcting, and adding to his voluminous diary; he then stole round the table, and exactly confronting the writer, he uttered a low groan.

George Sydney looked—he gave but one glance—then covering his face with his hands, began quickly to utter some exorcism or prayer.

The figure remained perfectly mute. George looked up again, and for a moment shuddered with fear; then starting up, he exclaimed—"Hence, fiend, I fear you

not!—even though you assume the form of the dead, I fear you not! I defy you—you cannot harm me!"

"Beware, George Sydney, thou murderer!" uttered the seeming apparition, in a sepulchral tone.

"Ah, you speak!—fool that I am—what puzzle is this? The dead speak not, nor do they assume the form of mortal mould! Say, then, who art thou?"

"Coleman!"

"What! real? living? here? impossible!"

"Escaped from the murderers you paid to finish me."

Sydney rushed towards the door; he would have fled, but Coleman (for he it was) was too quick for him. Ere he could reach it, the now active visitor had doubly locked the door, and placed the key in his pocket.

"What means this, ruffian! do you

wish to murder me? If such be your intent, know that I am armed."

"And so am I," replied Coleman, showing his pistol. "When I keeps company with the likes of you, I never goes without the proper tools."

"What do you want?"

"Sit down and I'll tell you; and if you've a drop of liquor, place it on the table. It wont be the first time as I've drank with a mankiller, Master George."

"Be less familiar, fellow! tell your tale quickly and begone," said his late master, bringing out some bottles and glasses from a cellaret; for although he spoke fearlessly he was far from easy in his mind.

"Lor' bless you! do you think I only come in to go away again directly? Not I! We've a long reckoning to settle, and I promise you I shan't hurry myself; so here's to you," added Coleman, as he

sat down and began drinking. "Come, Master George, bring yourself to anchor and listen."

"Clearly understand me: I will not allow any impertinent familiarity; that I thus permit you to address me, be good enough to recollect is a condescension; you are a servant, or have been so; I am a gentleman."

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Coleman; "a pretty sort of a gen'leman—I likes that!"

"Try me not too far, lest I forget myself and lay my hands on you!"

"No, you wont, Georgy," replied the late valet with a grin, as he placed his life preserver on the table beside him.

"Unlock the door!"

"Not as I knows of! You mustn't play no tricks with me; before this, you should have known well as I warn't so easily got rid of."

"But if you'll only go home to-night I'll see you at any hour to-morrow—I don't like keeping the lodging-house people up so late."

"Lor' lov'ee, they're all a-bed long ago!"

"Then how can you get out?"

"Bless me! I forgot to tell you. I sleeps immediately above you; so take care what you says in your dreams." Coleman by this time was slightly affected by the wine he had drunk, and was therefore somewhat facetious.

"And how have you obtained a footing in this house?"

"I've Lord George Somebody's bedroom, and paid for it in advance. I'm your fellow-lodger, and I means never to leave you."

"Fiend! I'd prefer death to such company;" and he suddenly seized a pistol from the mantelpiece and fired direct at

the intruder. The weapon missed fire; George threw it indignantly away.

"Well, well, George, you does undervally my talents. What! set down with you and talk about dangerous matters with a loaded pistol within your reach! You surely didn't think as I was such a born fool? Not I! Afore you came in I took the caps off both your pocket pets and put your favourite stiletto (as you calls it) into my pocket. Here it is," and he showed it.

"Double distilled villain!" muttered Sydney.

"Well, you is a good one to talk of villains, you is!" continued Coleman, who was rendered suddenly sober and alert by the unexpected attack made on him; "you is a nice one to talk. But tell me, and tell me truly, if you had shot me, how would you have accounted for the act?"

"As a thief you stole into my apart-

ments, and believing you to be a common robber, I despatched you. It would have been justifiable homicide; and even had I been slightly punished by fine or imprisonment, it would have been worth it to get rid of one who seems to possess a second life only to worry me and render me miserable."

"Well, that's candid. Now, you see, if I chose to retaliate, I don't want the means—you are in my power; but I ain't come for that, far from it; I intends that you shall live long to share your fortune with me."

"Monster! what mean you?"

"Sit down quietly and listen."

CHAPTER XIX.

RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE.

"And now, Mr. George Sydney—Honourable George Sydney, if you likes—first listen to me, as I said before, and then answer some of my questions," resumed Coleman.

"I will attend to you, and make such replies as I think proper."

"'You had better!" said the other, playing with the life-preserver; "perhaps you will have the goodness to recollect that I am a desperate man, and, thanks to you, a criminal."

"Me! how so?"

"Did you not teach me to forge? did you not tempt me to run away with a

mad lady; and then, by way of compensation, as you calls it, did you not hire two villains to murder me? Now don't deny it; if you do, I shall lose my temper, and then I can't answer for myself."

"Well!"

"But it ain't well. I means, my sweet tulip, to make you pay for all this; but afore I settles down as your pal, I intends to find out your tools. Jem Marks—by-the-by, I am astonished at your employing such a low cad—and your intimate friend, Dr. Compartz; I means to hang them chaps if I can, and when this is done I'll come and join you; in the meantime, you mustn't move from this."

"Who will prevent me?"

"I will; you knows I means what I says, so don't you be a-kicking against the bricks."

"Well, suppose I consent to this, will you leave me now?"

"Not by no means; do you think as I lives on air? I wants some money."

"There—there's a five-pound note for you, and now be off."

"Five devils! you is a niggard, George, and no mistake."

"Don't call me George; I wont allow it."

"Shall I call you murderer—forger—seducer—hypocrite, or what does you like to be called?"

"Wretch!" roared Sydney, "I shall lose my patience."

"Take my advice," coolly answered Coleman, "take my advice, and don't be making a noise, or I'll crack your cocoa-nut; remember, you ain't speaking to your servant now."

"Well then, don't provoke me."

"You said just now you liked a clear understanding; well then, partner—for

you know as an accomplice is a partner—you must know I don't allow no one to blow me up a-cause I ask for money as is owing to me in a civil way."

"Owing to you! I owe you nothing. If I give you anything, it is in charity."

"That's a lie! charity be whipped! I don't ask no charity, I insists on my rights; to-night I'll be content with a pony, perhaps to-morrow I may require more."

"Suppose I've not as much about me?"

"Oh, a cheque will do."

"And if I stop the payment?"

"You dare not."

"And why, my good friend?"

"Because you'd repent it all your life, and I'd make money by it."

"How?"

"I'd only tell Lord Urmstone as you was the seducer of his wife."

"You could not dare!"

"Don't think that; I dare a great deal. What do you think of telling your brother how you detained his wife in the madhouse; would you like that any better?"

"Demon from hell! why thus torture me?"

"Well, that's pretty words for what you calls a pious Christian."

"Taunt me not! or by the heavens above me I will strike you, though it cost me my life!"

"Don't talk so silly."

"Suppose in the conflict I could manage to destroy you?"

"It wouldn't do you no good; I left a parcel all ready directed to the Earl of Grantchester, and I've left it with a very near friend as I've got to despatch it unless he sees me afore twelve to-morrow."

"And what does the parcel contain?"

"Well, as you asks me, I'll tell you. First, there's a letter from me, telling him all about Lady Urmstone, and about Lady Grantchester, and about the Irish attempt, and all that sort of thing; and in order to make him know as my story is true, I've enclosed an old diary of yours, as I took from you soon after you left the Albany, written in your own handwriting, and telling a lot of these tales."

"Impossible! it is written in cypher."

"I knows that; so I prigged what you calls the key—I calls it the explanation of these here pothooks and hangers, and I enclosed it in the parcel."

"Swear this is true!"

"Not I; you wouldn't believe my oath a bit more nor I should believe yours. Why, you forgets; you ain't humbugging in Exeter Hall; *je voo conny, Monseer Tartoof!*"

"Call me again by that name, and

by the heavens above me I'll strike you!"

"Try it on—you said so twice—so come on if you ain't a coward."

"Don't goad me beyond endurance."

"Oh, you're afraid, are you? murderers and hippocrites ain't no courage, that's flat."

Sydney had managed, unseen by Coleman, to get hold of the poker, and now with a sudden movement he aimed a deadly blow at the ruffian's head.

In his attempt, however, he was foiled; the valet springing up averted the falling weapon with his arm, and changing its direction it struck the table-lamp, and dashed it into a thousand pieces.

The paraffin instantly ignited, and flaming about set fire to every object. In less time than we have taken to record it, the curtains, the table-cloth, and every object of furniture were on fire. The floor

resembled a flood of burning lava. George now screamed to Coleman to open the door; the latter, in his alarm and confusion, vainly endeavoured to take the key from his great-coat pocket, which he had laid aside; and panic-struck by the sudden danger, he loudly and piteously called for help.

Some of the paraffin had fallen on George; he was now in a perfect blaze. He well knew that there was no hope; he must be destroyed by the devouring element long before succour could arrive. He uttered not a single cry—he uttered not a single prayer; he knew his fate, and with loud execrations he rushed on Coleman, who was trying to escape by the window, and clasping him in his arms, hissed in his ear as well as his agony would permit, "Wretch! we die together!" and drawing him closely to his chest they were soon both wrapped in one flame.

The piercing cries of the dying men; their last blasphemous curses, their last thoughts, we will not endeavour to describe; they were far too horrible to be recorded.

When the door was burst open and the fire extinguished, two charred bodies alone represented George Sydney and his once faithful valet.

From their papers, which were now examined, their names and status were discovered, and the master of the house proceeded without delay to communicate the sad news to the Earl of Grantchester.

CHAPTER XX.

FRATERNAL GRIEF.

On the following morning the party at Grantchester House had assembled for breakfast; the Earl was in high good humour, and the meal was just over, when the servant brought in the *Times* newspaper. Lord Grantchester took it, and, as he generally did, sat down to read it, before he retired to his study. Lady Grantchester and her son were chatting on a couch immediately opposite, when Lord Sydney observed his father turn deadly pale and fall back in his chair insensible, attacked, as Sydney believed, by apoplexy. He instantly requested Lady Grantchester to send for medical

assistance, assuring her, however, in order to quiet her fears, that the Earl had only fainted through weakness. On the arrival of the surgeon—who happened luckily to be in the house—the usual remedies were applied, and his lordship opening his eyes, and recovering his consciousness, uttered "Poor George!" at the same time pointing to the journal which had fallen on the floor.

The captain snatched up the newspaper, and, examining its contents, his eyes suddenly rested on the following paragraph:—

"Serious Fire and Loss of Life.—Last night, shortly after midnight, a fire burst out in Mr. Smith's lodging-house in Halfmoon-street. The engines arrived in a very short time, and in less than an hour the flames were got under; but not before everything on the first and second floors was destroyed. As soon as the fire-

men were able to enter—which they did at the risk of their lives—they were horrified on discovering the bodies of two human beings lying close to each other, so charred it was impossible to recognise their features or their persons. The loss is estimated at £4000. The property was insured."

"FURTHER DETAILS.

"The cause of the fire is supposed to be the sudden ignition of the curtains, while the gentlemen who occupied the apartments were asleep. We much regret to add, that one of the victims has been recognised as the Honourable George Sydney, LL.D., a brother of the Earl of Grantchester, and one of the most gifted theologians in this country. The other body has not been recognised."

Lord Sydney was greatly shocked on reading this announcement, which fully

accounted for his father's agitation. He was now, however, restored to consciousness and, with the help of his son, retired to his study. Fondly attached as he had been to his only brother, he now mourned in deep sorrow that brother's fate, though his grief was mingled with no small share of surprise at his "dear George" being in London without visiting him.

A letter soon after came in announcing the event which he had just seen recorded in the newspaper. The present communication was signed by the proprietor of the house in Halfmoon-street. After detailing the circumstances of the fearful occasion, the correspondent went on to express a hope that his lordship might be able to discover the name of the second sufferer. A letter had been found in a portmanteau belonging to the lodger on the second floor addressed to a Mr. Coleman, and as the said lodger had not been found

nor had made his appearance since the fire, it was supposed to be him; but how he came into the room with Mr. Sydney it was impossible to say; unless, indeed, he was some clergyman who had visited the honourable gentleman on business of the Church. The letter went on to say that no property had been recovered, and that a coroner's inquest was about to be held, &c., &c.

The Earl's grief scarcely permitted him to decipher this letter; and he certainly gave a sigh to the memory of the faithful Coleman who had thus died with his master—a pattern of fidelity even to the last hour of his life.

Lord Grantchester gave orders that no visitor was to be admitted excepting Mr. Scarsdale, who would come by appointment about the establishment of the claims of Captain Leslie to the title of

Sydney, and the Grantchester estates when the Earl should be called away.

Having made these arrangements Lord Grantchester closed the door, and in solitude gave way to his feelings of sorrow, not forgetting, however, to offer up a prayer to Heaven for his deceased brother. The Earl was a Protestant—a rigid Protestant; but, in the hour of bereavement, he felt as every Christian must feel—a desire to offer up his humble mediation to the throne of mercy in favour of the loved one who had passed away.

It was nearly one o'clock when a servant came in and stated that a person at the gate wished most particularly to see his lordship.

"I told you I would see no one."

"It is in vain, my lord, to tell him this; I have even threatened to send for the police, but he kept ringing the bell and insisting on seeing you. He says

he fears something dreadful has happened to a friend of his; and he has brought you a letter from him, which he is bound to put into your lordship's own hands."

"Really, at such a moment it is very distressing to be thus intruded upon. Does he know that I am——"

"Oh Lor', yes, my lord; I explained to him that, but he said it was something about this business as he was come."

"Did he name any one?"

"He said he came, my lord, from a Mr. Coleman, or some such name."

"Indeed! Are you sure he said Coleman?"

"I think so, my lord."

"Well then, show him in."

The servant went out, and returned showing in a well-dressed person, apparently a footman out of place, or some such individual.

"You have demanded, I understand—rather than asked—to see me?" sternly observed Lord Grantchester. "Did not the servant state to you that I was in deep affliction?"

"He did, my lord; but my business could not be delayed. I swore, my lord, to deliver you myself this packet, and to say it comes from your brother's former valet."

"Former! Was he not in his service to the last? Why, I have reason to believe he died with my poor dear brother;" and Lord Grantchester wiped a tear from his eye.

"No, he left him some time ago; but as to his being dead, that's very likely, for he swore to me if he was alive at twelve o'clock to-day, he'd take back this big packet;" and the stranger pulled out a very large letter, tied with a string and sealed, and presented it to the peer.

"Had I not better open it, and then perhaps you can explain its contents?"

"Oh, my lord, I'd be very sorry you'd do so. I am a brother-in-law of Coleman's, my lord, but I don't know any of his secrets."

"What secrets can he have with me?"

"Really I can't pretend to say, my lord; but having delivered his parcel to your lordship, I am now all impatience to go and see whether my brother-in-law is dead or not. Was it by accident he died?"

"He was burnt."

"Indeed! Would you, my lord, give me the address, and I'll go there directly?"

"Mr. Smith's lodging-house, Half-moon-street. I shall probably myself be there in an hour or two, to hear

the case explained before the coroner's inquest."

"Good-bye, my lord; I was really sorry to be forced to intrude on your lordship—good-bye!" and the man left the room.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MYSTERIOUS COMMUNICATION.

LORD GRANTCHESTER tore open the packet. It appeared to consist of a long letter and several other papers bound up together. His tears rose so quickly to his eyes, he found it a difficult task to read; but wiping them away, he made an effort, and at length made out the letter. It ran thus:—

"EARL OF GRANTCHESTER.

"I, William Coleman, late the Vallet of your Bruther Gorge, will most likely be ded or gone away before you reads these lines; For I am goin too see my late marster, and tell him my mind; and

if he duzzunt satisfye me Ile kil im or he shall kil me, as he has a-tried to doo before. If so be ime ded my Bruther will giv you this. If so be he is ded, Then He has gone to Amerrycur.

"Now, i write nott promiskisley, Butt on Bisyness as far as tellin you the rele truth about your bruther:—

"1. It was Mister Gorge that tuk orf—rewinned and deseerted Lady Umston.

"2. I was he as pade the assassin too fyre at you in Ireland.

"3. It was the Honoorable Gorge as pade Mother Marks to destry your brat, Butt I thinks as the Chylde is livin, at leest so Jem Marks told me.

"4. He maid me carry orf My Lady to Brusuls, and told me to finish her thare, as he mite be nearer the property.

"5. He tryed too get me murdered, and for that Ile kil him.

"6. He gav muther Marks pisin to pisin you, and then he'd be a Lord.

"I could tel you more butt I wont—But as you'll think these lyes, I encloses letturs and doguments as will prove them all too be treu—Good bye. Be ware of Gorge.

"WILLIAM COLEMAN."

The reading of this strange epistle had so shocked the Earl that he now fell back in his chair, and remained nearly a quarter of an hour in deep reflection; then, starting up, he cried—"No—no, I'll not believe the foul jargon! George was noble, generous, and pious. Am I to take the word of a disgraced menial against my own brother? I feel ashamed of having attended to the vile scrawl of this fellow. No, thus perish such falsehood!" and the

Earl rushed to the table, determined on destroying the papers, as Mr. Scarsdale entered.

"I regret to learn the fatal news; I much fear it will deeply afflict your lordship. But why this dreadful—this unusual agitation? your grief should be restrained," said Scarsdale.

"It is not grief alone that now moves me."

"What is it, then, my lord?"

"I have just received a letter containing the most vile calumnies respecting my late brother; it comes from a discharged servant."

"Coleman?" quickly asked the lawyer.

"How do you know the name of poor George's valet?"

"Never mind how I learnt it; I repeat the question—was Coleman the writer of the letter you allude to?"

"He was; though how you divined it I cannot comprehend."

"May I be permitted to see the communication?"

"Oh, decidedly; though I'm half ashamed that I did not destroy it before I read it through; there it is." And he handed Coleman's epistle to his friend.

Mr. Scarsdale read the letter, and then re-read it, without uttering a word.

"Did you ever read such falsehoods?"

Instead of replying, the man of law demanded—"Have you got the proofs alluded to, and have you examined them?"

"Yes, here they are; forgeries, no doubt. I would not wrong dear George's memory by looking at them."

Scarsdale closely inspected them one by one; he held some of them up to the light, and perused them all with the greatest attention. He then solemnly addressed the Earl:

"I wish Coleman had not thus ad-

dressed you; after all, perhaps you were right in wishing to burn them."

"What do you mean? Surely you do not believe these charges against my brother?"

"I did not say so, my lord."

"No, but your tone and manner show me they have made some impression on you."

"They have."

"You cannot surely put faith in the preposterous allegations of an ignorant and wicked menial?"

"My lord, you forget that they are supported by documentary proofs."

"They may be, as I said before, forgeries."

"Not so, they are genuine; I have closely examined them; besides, an ignorant man like Coleman could scarcely thus simulate various handwritings."

"You then believe the accusations?

Say — before Heaven — do you believe them?"

"I do," solemnly replied the lawyer.

"And why?"

"The greater part of them I have long been aware of."

"Oh, do not say so! could such a monster exist? and yet I know you would not lightly say this."

"Alas! my dear lord, your late brother ——"

"Call him not my brother! rather call him a monster. Never—never, after this day shall his name pass these lips. Give me—but no, take the damning proofs with you, and keep them safely as a record—a justification of my conduct. I will not see his remains; I will mourn but in outward appearance. Come here, Lady Grantchester," added he, turning to his wife, who now entered; "I know all; it was my brother who detained you a prisoner in an asylum."

"So I believe," replied she, in a low voice.

"And who took you abroad, and brought you back?"

Lady Grantchester remained silent.

"You may speak freely now," chimed in Scarsdale; "the man is dead by whom you were bound to silence."

She looked up and uttered—"Mr. Coleman."

"Fool—fool! blind idiot that I've been!" cried the Earl, striking his forehead. "But let this cease; let no signs of grief or mourning be shown in this house. Let none under my roof attend the funeral of the arch villain that died last night; and never—never again let my ears be polluted by the hated name of George Sydney."

"My excellent friend—my dear lord, do be less excited."

"I am perfectly cool; I speak ad-

visedly; I am determined. If you think I should not do so, I will not give the order myself; but in this case, my dear Scarsdale, I trust to you and to my son to let my wishes be known throughout my household."

"It shall be done. I ask you but one favour — let friendship seal your lips respecting Lady Urmstone; the information would kill the old statesman; it would render your son miserable for life, and perhaps break off his match."

"I will not say a word. I equally, from this moment, banish from my mind the memory of the man whom I once looked upon as a brother—the contents of the despatch I have received. Louisa, my love, I truly estimate your fond affection in thus concealing from me circumstances which would have deeply embittered my life. Scarsdale, I thank

you sincerely, for I suspect you knew all."

"Lady Grantchester," said Scarsdale, parrying the question, "let us for the present leave the Earl."

CHAPTER XXII.

SURPRISES.

"THIS is certainly a very beautiful place, papa," said Lady Emily to her father as she looked out of the window at Grantchester House.

"Yes; it's extremely well laid out, and quite wonderful, considering its near proximity to the metropolis; but it is nothing in comparison to my old friend's mansion in Cambridgeshire, or his magnificent—I might almost say palatial—residence in Ireland. Why, the lake there is at least twenty times as large as this place—house, park, and ornamental grounds all put together."

"And Mr. George Sydney would

have inherited all this splendid property?"

"Had he lived, decidedly they would all have been his. The estates of Grantchester go with the title."

"And now that the poor man is dead, who is the heir?"

"A distant cousin, I believe—one who is scarcely known to my friend; and I truly fear he will soon possess them, for this sudden loss of his loved brother will, I fear, have a fatal effect on the Earl."

"Is it not rather soon, dear papa, to come and intrude on his sorrow?"

"Not so; I am his most intimate friend. Besides, I wish to know if it is to be a public funeral, and when it is to take place."

"Lord Sydney will be here directly, his lordship desired me to say," said a servant opening the door, delivering his message, and then closing it quickly.

"Who is Lord Sydney?" asked Lady Emily.

"I really cannot say, my dear child; probably some member of the family, though I never heard of the title before."

"That's strange, dear papa; for I always looked upon you as a walking peerage. I wonder what can induce Lord Grantchester thus to send a stranger to receive us!"

"Very probably the old peer is so stricken by grief he is unable to leave his chamber, and has deputed this relation to receive his guests and direct the necessary melancholy arrangements required on these sad occasions."

"May it not be possible, darling papa, that this may be the next heir?"

"I should say that it was highly improbable that the next heir would intrude at such a moment—it would be most indelicate; besides, even were he the next

in succession, he could have no possible right to assume the title, which can only be assumed by the son of a peer entitled to confer this distinction (by courtesy) on his heir-apparent."

"Well, papa, we shall soon solve the mystery, for I hear footsteps approaching."

The door opened, and their old favourite, John Leslie, stood before them.

"Oh! my dearest dear John, I am so glad to see you; the servant said a Lord Sydney was coming to receive us. And now do tell us, how does Lord Grantchester bear his bereavement—very sadly, I fear?"

"Far from it. At first he was almost struck down with grief; but a few hours afterwards he seemed suddenly to recover from the blow, and is now almost cheerful."

"How very strange!" murmured Lord Urmstone; "I did not like him myself,

but Grantchester appeared to idolize him."

"I only tell you the fact; he even talks of leaving London as if he were going on a pleasure trip."

"I am much afraid, my dear John," said the peer, "it will postpone your nuptials for at least twelve months, and I sometimes feel a dread that I shall never live to behold the fruition of my every wish thus matured."

"Ah! indeed, my lord, that would be a sad postponement; but I cannot help thinking my father might be induced to shorten the period."

"Your father!"

"I mean the Earl of Grantchester; he has desired me so to call him."

"Ay, and I love you as well, dear John, as if you were the son of the proudest peer in the realm. Do you know Lord Grantchester's heir?" enquired Lady Emily.

"I cannot say that I ever met him, though by character I am thoroughly acquainted with him."

"And do you like him?"

"Decidedly."

"Well, there we differ for the first time," cried the spoiled child, pouting; "I hate him!"

"And why?"

"Because papa says he will inherit all the fortune and estates of Lord Grantchester."

"Very true. But tell me, dear girl, would you hereafter like to be the mistress of these lovely spots?"

"And share them with you?"

"Of course."

"Oh! then, indeed, I should be happy."

"Then, loved girl, they shall all be yours!"

Lord Urmstone stared; Emily was truly surprised.

"And what would the future Earl say to this?"

"He has consented."

"Oh! then I shall love him."

"You already do so."

"How?"

"All this must belong to——"

"Lord Sydney," quickly interrupted the agitated girl.

"Allow me to present him to you, my sweet girl, with all due formality; permit me to introduce John Marks Leslie, Viscount Sydney!" and he bowed low.

"What can all this mean?" demanded Lord Urmstone.

"Papa! papa! do say, am I dreaming?"

"Excuse me, my dearest boy, for not following you quicker," cried the Earl of Grantchester, who now entered the room, addressing Lord Sydney. "Pardon me,

my dear Urmstone, and you, my fair daughter-in-law, for thus detaining you."

The visitors exchanged looks of astonishment.

"What can all this mean?" solemnly said Lord Urmstone. "My adopted son calls himself Lord Sydney, and now my noble friend calls my child his daughter! Do—do speak, some one, and explain all this. Has the loss of your valued relative, George Sydney——"

"Never let me hear that name breathed!" interrupted the Earl of Grantchester. "If you are my friend, never utter that hated name again!"

Lady Emily and her father began to think they had got into a lunatic asylum.

At this moment Lady Grantchester entered. After saluting her guests, she turned to Lord Sydney:—"The weather is so fine, I came to propose a walk in the garden; I am anxious to see if some im-

provements I suggested have been carried out. Lady Emily, will you come? my son will accompany us."

As well as her astonishment would allow her, Emily cheerfully assented, and they at once passed out to the terrace, from which they descended to the grounds.

As soon as the two noblemen were left alone, Lord Grantchester fully explained to his wondering friend all that had occurred, concluding by blessing that merciful Providence which had restored to him a son—and such a son, one of whom he might well be proud.

"And George——"

"Hush! name him not. You may believe that I would not be thus moved by resentment, had I not bitter cause. God forgive him, as I do. I will to-morrow pay any debts he may have left, and carry out any obligations he may have entered

into. He will have a proper but a quiet funeral; Sydney, my beloved boy, shall see him laid in the earth, for I will not allow him to be placed in the family vault, and this done, I will wipe him from my memory for ever. But hush! the ladies are returning."

"Well, Lady Grantchester, I think you found all your wishes carried out."

"Some of them," replied his wife; "but others I shall not see for a fortnight."

"Say rather for some months, for I've formed a plan which I trust none of you will oppose. Lord Urmstone has never yet denied me any favour, and as it will hasten the marriage of my son, I do hope Lady Emily will not object to it. The real fact is this—after the occurrences of the last forty-eight hours, my son could not approach the hymeneal altar for at least twelve months."

"So I feared," said Lord Urmstone.

"But as I would not willingly pain two loving hearts, I have ordered preparations to be made to start for Ireland the day after to-morrow. We will all go direct to Shannon Castle, and spend three months there as happily as we can; at the end of that period we will return to England, and the marriage shall take place in our village church at Grantchester. I was married there myself, and so was my father; I therefore hope no objections will be urged."

"God bless you for that!" uttered Lord Sydney.

Emily's eyes bespoke her gratitude.

Lady Grantchester saw with the intuitive perception of a woman, that the arrangement had been made in a spirit of delicacy to remove her from the scene of her late sufferings.

Lord Urmstone began to hope he

would yet lead his darling child to the altar and bless her before he left this world.

"And now for luncheon," cried Lord Grantchester, in a gay tone. "Mr. Scarsdale is waiting in the library for us. I am happy to say all the marriage settlements must be altered now. Come, my Lord Sydney, lead the way with your future bride;" and away they all went.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SHORT SUMMARY.

THREE months is a long period to look forward to; it, however, soon slips away. Look back, good reader, on the last quarter of a year, and say, although that period may have been crowded with strange and important events, has it not passed as a short dream? Three months probation seemed a long period to the engaged couple, yet it at last came to an end; and really it slipped away so quickly, so quietly, that it only appeared as one short scene of uninterrupted happiness.

It is true that during this period many events had passed—interesting, perhaps,

to the world around them, but scarcely noticed by the joyous pair.

An inquest had been held on the body of George Sydney, and a verdict of "Accidental death" returned.

Coleman had not been positively identified, so the same verdict was given on him as "A person unknown."

The former had been buried in a quiet manner in Brompton Cemetery.

Notwithstanding his many villanies, Lord Grantchester (at the suggestion of Mr. Scarsdale) caused Coleman to be decently interred at his lordship's expense since he felt grateful to him as having been the instrument, under Heaven, of his dear wife's restoration to her home.

Lieutenant Johnston, R.N. (as he called himself), was caught in the act of picking an old lady's pocket; in return for which, her Majesty was pleased

to give him board and lodging during twelve months in one of her numerous castles, where he amused himself in beating hemp and forming new plans of retaliation on the ungrateful public, as soon as he should get out.

Jem Marks went out to one of our many colonies; his lordship the presiding judge, on the day of his trial, having determined that he should, for the benefit of his health and the safety of his fellow-subjects, pass the remainder of his natural life far from the shores of Old England.

Mrs. Rearden, alias Mrs. Marks, alias Mrs. Thompson, suffered not a little from the attacks of delirium tremens brought on by her constant attachment to the bottle. She, however, married again (believing, as she said, that poor Jem was legally dead), and seemed to enjoy all the good things of life. Unhappily, however,

one night, as she attempted to come downstairs in the dark to get another glass of her favourite liquor, indulging in the hope that it would make her sleep, her foot unfortunately slipped and she fell down. In the morning she was found dead and cold on the rug in the passage, to which she had managed to crawl. Rumour, with her usually scandalous tongue, whispered that she had been foully murdered by her last husband. Whether this be true or not we cannot say; but certain it is, the man was never seen again. Not one sixpence of money belonging to the late housekeeper ever was found.

But enough of these vile doings; let us turn from the painful picture to that of true happiness—let us turn to Lord Sydney and his intended bride. The three months had passed away; the days of probation were over. They were now starting for Cambridgeshire; in forty-

eight hours they would be man and wife; before Heaven and the world their fates would be indissolubly linked. For weal or woe, their future lives would be passed together.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SUNSHINE AFTER CLOUDS.

THE village of Grantchester is proverbially one of the very neatest, cleanest, and quietest villages in England. We must, however, admit that it is one of the dullest. The quiet labourer who returns from his work for an hour, to partake of his comfortably-prepared meal, goes straight to his home, and without calling at the public-house, or intruding on his neighbours, eats his dinner and again as quickly returns to his duties. The post-office scarcely exhibits a sign-board to announce its whereabouts. The pretty little inn, a pattern for such establishments, scarcely boasts a gallon of

spirits; it seldom resounds with the noise of riotous guests: here the peasant or shopkeeper drops in, and takes his pint of ale in the bar or the tap, and then proceeds on his journey. The smithy boasts no loungers, and the very children of the national school seem brought up to habits of quietude. Grantchester is proved by certain old deeds to have once been a bustling town; it is now a noiseless village.

How, then, must this peaceful spot have been frightened out of its propriety as the joy-bells from the fine old church poured forth a merry peal! The sacred edifice stood with its gates widely thrown open, and the excellent and hard-working village clergyman stood ready robed to receive some wedding-party of rank, since everything bespoke the coming of some high personages. Presently the inhabitants of the little hamlet were attracted

to their cottage doors by the loud noise of wheels, and, to their great delight, four or five carriages—carriages emblazoned with noble arms—dashed up to the church-door. In a few minutes it is known that the lord of the soil in an adjoining parish is the leader of the cortège—he whose title is identical with that of their homes. In an instant, a lovely girl descends from one of the equipages, while a handsome youth, one on whom Nature has stamped her impress of true nobility, having preceded them, now comes to the old porch to receive her, and hands her along the aisle of the holy building. The Earl and Countess of Grantchester come next; the Earl of Urmstone and the two bridesmaids follow; then come some half dozen private friends, and a swarm of curious villagers close the train.

The merry chimes cease, the solemn

hour has arrived; the lovely bride approaches trembling with apparent fear yet true joy the altar, where the priest stands with his book open; beside her, the object of her fond love kneels, and though she feels that she now nominally leaves her home and severs the ties of nearest kindred, yet she is proudly confident that she is about to give her hand to one who will well repay her love and be a son to her fond parent. And he—what were his feelings on the solemn occasion? those of unmitigated delight. He felt no speculative hope of happiness within his manly breast; he had been brought up from infancy with the lovely being he was about to call his own; he felt certain—he knew—he must be the happiest of men.

There was no parade of aristocratic prelates; the excellent pastor of Grantchester managed without the assistance

of even a single bishop to join their hands in holy matrimony; two bridesmaids, only, performed the whole duty of the usual bevy now so preposterously numerous. The whole affair was carried through with that holy humility which alone should be displayed in the house of God.

The bells again began pealing, and the voices of the crowd rent the air.

Lord and Lady Sydney alone entered their own carriage, which had been driven down unoccupied. The Earl of Grantchester left a splendid donation for the poor, and a rich bounty to enable every honest heart in the village to share in his own happiness.

On their return to the Earl's noble mansion they found everything was prepared which a quiet marriage justified; and although there was no public breakfast, no dancing, no fireworks, yet every

tenant on the estates of Lord Grantchester and Lord Urmstone had a solid reason for rejoicing in the union of the two noble houses.

Shall we say more—shall we add how happy the deserving couple became—how happy they are? No; we think we have already sufficiently admitted our readers BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

THE END.

4